

The Museum Profession in
Aotearoa New Zealand:
a case study in
economic restructuring
and investigating the
movement towards feminisation

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of economic restructuring and the movement towards feminisation of the museum profession in Aotearoa New Zealand in the period 1984 – 1999. Radical economic and structural changes were imposed on most public sector organisations by the fourth Labour Government (1984–1990) and the subsequent National Government (1990–1999). During this time, museums increased the numbers and ratio of women employed in professional roles at such a rate that it cannot be wholly accounted for by the introduction of Equal Employment Opportunities legislation (EEO) and improved education and employment opportunities for women. This thesis explores three factors that contributed to this increase.

First, the impact of the restructuring policies paved the way for a new business ethos to enter and reshape museum practice in unprecedented ways since 1984, shifting from a public service model into a public management culture of competitiveness and commercialisation. Second, transformations in the sector already occurring prior to 1984 involving democratic ideals instigated a shift in the museum's conception of their public; improving public access, increasing the museum's popularity and serving under-represented audiences. Third, a shift in perception of the museum visitor since 1984 from citizen to consumer has in turn led to greater emphasis of the customer service role and contributed to a decline in the status of museum work. The devaluation of museum work can be linked to the dramatic employment growth of women in the museum sector. This growth is evaluated in terms of feminisation theory but only in so far as the increased importance of customer service work roles in the museum sector are associated with the "feminine". Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with 17 mid-career museum professionals is utilised as a means to conceptualise, describe and assess the effects of economic restructuring, the introduction of the new management model and the relationship to feminisation.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Ronald James Cobley, who after numerous years of loyal service as a middle manager for a multi-national organisation was made redundant in the mid 1980's. My father's redundancy has in part shaped my desire to obtain a deeper understanding of the impact of the radical economic restructuring programme in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Preface – Behind the Scenes at the Museum

The museum professional works at the museum before, during and after museum public opening hours, traversing the two worlds of the museum – the public spaces of the exhibition galleries as well as behind the scenes at the museum. Beyond the glass cases of the exhibition spaces lies a maze of corridors. Doorways open to more rooms, desks, filing cabinets, bookcases, posters of past exhibitions, and computers. Other doorways open to dark, air-controlled rooms. Heavy in their silence, these rooms contain, through their objects, histories, stories and a sense of wonder. Some of the flora specimens date back to the era of Captain Cook's explorations; the scrawling handwriting of the Endeavour's naturalist, the Swede Daniel Carl Solander (Rauschenberg 1968),¹ identifies each botanical specimen and dates it 1768-1771. Further through the maze of doorways, the spaces get noisier; this is the territory of the exhibition designers and technicians. Smell can also identify workspaces. The basement of the Natural History Unit of The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa exudes a sharp, acidic smell of alcohol-preserved specimens. Rows of jars containing previous life from the sea create simultaneous experiences of curiosity and revulsion – curiosity because several of these alcohol-preserved specimens date back to the early nineteenth century, and revulsion as some of the specimens have disintegrated or appear to have undergone a mutation process. On the upper floor of the Natural History Unit lies the "bug room." Here flesh-eating bugs² gnaw away on

¹ Interestingly, a storage system – the Solander box – commonly used in museums to hold and protect flat artefacts such as drawings, photographs and natural environment specimens is also associated with Daniel Carl Solander the naturalist.

² "These 'flesh eating bugs' are not a figment of our imagination... they are very real and tangible!! They are beetles of the family *Dermestidae*, a family of protein feeding bugs, which are very common everywhere in the world. A number of *Dermestid* species have been transported by humans with their cargo from very early times in history, and are now serious economic pests consuming large amounts of stored products such as dry meats, hams and other preserved meats, skins, furs, feathers, museum specimens, etc. Although seen as our enemies and competitors, these beetles perform an extremely important role in nature helping to recycle tons of dead animals, which otherwise would be rotting away everywhere for long periods. The species used in this museum for the cleaning of skeletons is *Dermestes Maculatus*, a beetle which likes relatively wet flesh. They are now placed in a specially quarantined building situated within [...] the museum" (e-mail communication, Ricardo Palma, Curator of Insects, Te Papa, 7 January 2001).

bones, thoroughly cleaning mammal skeletons so that they are suitable for study or exhibition. Some might wonder why the museum holds such an attraction as a work place. For others, there is no other place to work; it gets under your skin.

This study focuses on museums and the museum profession in Aotearoa New Zealand between the period 1984 – 1999; during this period museums, like most public sector organisations, had undergone radical economic and structural change. These changes were implemented by the economic policies of the fourth Labour Government in office from 1984 until 1990 and the drive was continued from 1990-1999 by the following National Government. The implications of these economic policies will be explored more fully in the Introduction and Chapter One. The type and effects of radical organisational transformation will be elaborated upon throughout the thesis. Particular emphasis will be placed on overlaps and connections between radical organisational restructuring with the broader development of feminised workplace practices in service orientated professions.

During this same period, 1984 – 1999, museums, like other public sector organisations have increasingly employed more women in professional roles. I wanted to explore the complex reasons underlying this trend as well as its implications for both the museum sector and those who consider themselves museum professionals. In particular I was interested in the relationship, if any, between economic restructuring, the increased importance of service, the increase in numbers and ratio of women employed in museums, and feminisation. On a less theoretical level, I decided to focus on women primarily because many of my colleagues were women. The women I knew had strong career goals and, like most museum professionals I came into contact with, were passionately committed to the idea of museums and to their work.

This study focuses on the experiences of women museum professionals in the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. I explore how these women make sense of their work in view of the recent changes and developments occurring within the museum. First, economic restructuring leads to a shift from a manufacturing-based to a service-based economy and this shift is evident in the museum sector in the move from the production of knowledge to its dissemination specifically in response to the demands of the museum customer. Therefore I set out to investigate if the changes stemming from external pressures such as economic restructuring, as described by the research participants, have contributed to the feminisation of museums.

Feminisation involves quantitative factors such as an increase in both the number and ratio of women employed in a profession combined with qualitative factors including a noticeable decline in the status and conditions of the professional group as a whole or within certain sectors of the professional group.

I ask whether the increased importance of customer service roles, roles traditionally assigned to women, caused the influx in numbers and ratio of women employed in Aotearoa New Zealand museums. Although traditionally considered service orientated through their “educational role,” museums in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere have been slow to employ women. Historically, women were most likely to be restricted to volunteer roles in museums.

Noticeable increases in women’s appointment to museum positions occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, a period where an increase in women’s participation occurred in the paid workforce overall. While the general increase in education and employment opportunities for women and the introduction of Equal Employment Opportunities Legislation (EEO) in the public sector in 1984 are important they can only partially account for this trend (Ministry of Women’s Affairs 1992). As economic restructuring policies also began in the 1980s care will be needed not to conflate these two trends.

The growing importance of service work, often considered a “female dominated” area, can certainly account for the increase in women’s employment in museums but, at the same time, because of its connotations of the “feminine,” the increasing “service orientation” of museum work, I believe, has led to its devaluation rather than women’s entry *per se*. Museum work has traditionally enjoyed a high status, particularly the work of curators. Drawing from the experiences and views expressed by the research participants, I consider if the emphasis on the role of service, the devaluation of museum work, and the increase in the number and ratio of women working in museums, are compatible with descriptions of feminisation (Reskin & Roos 1990; Nesbitt 1997). However one more point, specific to the museums rather than the general workplace needs to be explored and this concerns the museums’ relationship with their publics.

Since the 1970s the museum’s public has been receiving increasing attention, however this has been motivated by concerns to “democratise museums” and emphasis was placed on opening access to the museum and the role of education. Therefore I ask whether changes occurring within the museum sector prior to economic restructuring, such as the democratisation of museums, have contributed towards the dramatic increase in the number and ratio of women employed in the museum sector.

In order to address the significance and complexity of economic restructuring and radical organisational transformation in the museum sector and an analysis of feminisation theory I employ three research strategies. First, I review literature on museology and feminisation to provide the context of the study. Second, I utilise available population census and museum sector statistics to quantify the growth of the museum sector with a specific focus on the increase in the number and ratio of women working in museums and evaluate this growth in terms of feminisation theory. Third, I draw from interview data, based on the experiences of 17 mid-career women, as

qualitative evidence to conceptualise, describe and assess the effects of economic restructuring, radical organisational transformation, and the movement towards feminisation on the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. Specific emphasis is placed on how women in these organisations interpret the value and status of their work and if feminisation theory can fully account for these experiences and interpretations.

I write this thesis as a former museum professional and for the remainder of this *Preface* I reveal how my acquaintance with and curiosity about museums has shaped not only the research process and the writing of this thesis but also my perception of museums. The research process, which involved theoretical readings and fieldwork interviews, provided the foundation of my interest in assessing the implications of radical organisational transformation on my former profession and will be developed further in the research methods chapter.

What follows is a brief genealogy of my position as an insider to the museum profession in Aotearoa New Zealand. In the main body of this thesis I shift my position to that of a simultaneous insider/outsider; an insider because of my previous work experience in museums but an outsider because the research was undertaken some years after leaving my employment in museums. In the *Postscript* I shift my position once more in order to critically assess the research methods and analysis employed in the thesis and make recommendations to those who may wish to extend and revise this study into museums, women and feminisation.

My first museum position was a very junior role in the Education Department of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (MONZ) in Wellington in the early 1990s. Te Papa is a mixed collection museum and my area of specialty was art. Our formal responsibilities entailed taking guided tours around the exhibition spaces, in a variety of disciplines (art, history, Maori, science) and for a variety of audience

groups (students, the general public and tourists). We also performed the task of visitor reception and light security duties. Te Papa Tongarewa at that time employed approximately 300 staff (the Education Department comprised approximately 16 staff); from my junior position in the hierarchy, and as in many such institutional contexts, opportunity for promotion appeared out of reach. I left after one year.

I took up another education position with more responsibilities and autonomy in a smaller museum, the Dowse Art Museum in Lower Hutt. The Ministry of Education funded my position, as it did in about a dozen similar placements in other museums throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. The Dowse focused its collection on contemporary craft, and is renowned for the quality of this collection and its innovative exhibitions. I enjoyed the modest scale of the museum. The Dowse employed seven professional staff; all but one, the director, were female. The museum operated on a “flat hierarchy.” All departments were considered equal, as were the positions held by museum professional staff. As my women colleagues and I had similar profiles – we held advanced education qualifications, were on the whole Pakeha and middle-class, career orientated and aged between 25-42 years – I read this as another sign of our “equality.” At a glance our similarities predominated. Over time, however, I began to see differences, notably in the status and responsibilities associated with our particular positions in the museum.

At this stage it might be worth developing an idea of what is meant by museum within the context of this thesis. In general terms, the International Committee of Museums (ICOM) definition has been widely used although it does not allow for a clear differentiation between an art gallery and museum for example:

A museum is a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of

people and their environment. (www.icom.museum/definition.html,
12 June 2003)

Museums usually focus on the arena of social, cultural, ethnographic and science specific to a region, a national boundary, or a theme. Examples of thematic museums in Aotearoa New Zealand include transport, aviation, military and settler history such as the Museum of Technology and Transport (MOTAT) in Auckland, Air Force World, the Royal New Zealand Air Force's (RNZAF) Museum in Christchurch, the Army Museum in Waioru and the Otago Settlers Museum in Dunedin.

Most regions in Aotearoa New Zealand have their museums that focus on their local natural, Maori and social history as evident in the collections and exhibitions of the Whanganui Regional Museum and the Canterbury Museum, for example. The only national museum is Te Papa the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Art galleries within Aotearoa New Zealand often have a regional and/or specialty focus. For example The Dowse in Lower Hutt specialises in Aotearoa New Zealand craft arts while the City Gallery Wellington commands an innovative exhibition schedule of contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand and international art without the task of housing and maintaining a major collection. In contrast the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, the Auckland Art Gallery and the recently built Christchurch Art Gallery celebrate their historical and contemporary regional artists as well as national and international artists. Galleries such as these strive to contribute to the development of Aotearoa New Zealand's own art historical narrative while maintaining sufficient building standards in order to host travelling exhibitions of international art.

Finally, Science Centres are a recent addition to Aotearoa New Zealand's museum scene. Exhibition-based rather than collection-based Science Centres differ from museums in that they serve to educate about science by entertainment through the use of interactive exhibitions rather than to undertake research on their collections. Unlike museums, Science Centres rely on admission charges due to the high cost associated with maintaining the interactive displays. Differences between Science

Centres and museums will be developed in more detail in Chapter Two. Also related to the broad spectrum of museums are botanic gardens, zoological gardens and heritage buildings.

While the concept of museums serves as an umbrella term, differences between museums, art galleries and science centres are strongly upheld by certain sectors within the museum profession and in published literature. Differences centre primarily on the types of audiences these various organisations attract and the different functions they serve. Nevertheless, because the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand is comparatively small, employing fewer than 2000 people (Pattillo 1997: 2), there is a tendency for staff to traverse the divide particularly between that of museums and art galleries. Although I specialised in art history and education I have been employed in a dealer art gallery, undertaken volunteer work in a public art gallery, and have worked in a generic museum as well as an art museum.

In this thesis I chose to focus on the similarities between museums and art galleries, such as the mandate to serve the public, although I am aware that the types of publics each organisation endeavours to serve may differ. Within the context of this thesis, which focuses on the impact of organisational change and the process of feminisation in the museum sector, the fact that museum professionals are able to move their employment between museums and art galleries dilutes the significance of their distinctions. Further, government agencies and museum organisations such as the Museum Directors Federation (MDF), MAANZ (Museum Association of Aotearoa New Zealand), MEANZ (Museum Education Association of New Zealand) and the Registrars Group include museums and art galleries in their business focus.

This does not mean that I set out to dispute or dismantle the desire of those working in the industry at an academic and/or practice level who hold firmly to the principle that museums and art galleries serve different purposes and audiences, and in turn produce a different work culture. As will be revealed in Chapter Four I selected research

participants from both museums and art galleries as a means to see if despite the “organisational differences” radical organisational transformation undertaken by museums and art galleries in Aotearoa New Zealand produced similar experiences.

Radical government economic restructuring policies affected funding for education positions in both museums and art galleries equally. In 1994 a change in government policy resulted in museum educators funded by the Ministry of Education suddenly seeing their jobs at risk.³ During this period of policy and funding review of museum education positions I joined and became actively involved in the Museum Education Association of New Zealand (MEANZ), a national membership group for museum educators. My focus was on lobbying the Ministry of Education for the continuation of recognition and funding of museum education positions. Through this involvement I clearly saw that whilst education was a priority in the museum’s mission objective, teaching was often under-valued within the overall professional superstructure. This was particularly evident with museums that lost Ministry of Education funding and did not “find” money to maintain their education posts, and the people who held these positions simply disappeared. I also saw that women dominated the field of education. I wanted to explore this matter further. Here was a professional group

³ With this policy change, earlier provisions for the employment of museum educators were disestablished. The policy change signalled an end to a long tradition of teachers working in museums, which was introduced into Aotearoa New Zealand museums in the 1930s, instigated by the New York based Carnegie Corporation. See Constance Hall (1981) *Grandma’s Attic or Aladdin’s Cave: Museum Education Services for Children*, for a detailed history of the establishment and role of museum educator position in Aotearoa New Zealand museums and S. F. Markham & W. R. B. Oliver (1933) for the Carnegie commissioned study, *A Report on the Museums and Art Galleries of New Zealand*. The rationale for change offered by the Minister of Education, the Hon. Dr Lockwood Smith, was that “funding policies for the current services had been developed piecemeal from the former administrative structures in education” and “because of inconsistencies, it had been difficult to change the kinds of services” (Gibson 1993). Importantly, the proposed changes to the Learning Experiences Outside the Classroom (LEOTC) policy were consistent with National government policy of accountability for government expenditures and necessitated a change in the way LEOTC services were funded and accounted for (Gibson 1993). Most museums and Ministry of Education funded museum educators were opposed to the changes outlined in the new LEOTC policy (The New Zealand Herald 5 April 1993).

held in high esteem on a policy level yet were vulnerable and under-valued. This was exacerbated further by the threat of job loss.

This sense of vulnerability was not solely experienced by museum educators and was evident in a variety of other museum domains, most particularly perhaps by museum scientists. Research scientists were undergoing a similar period of transition and uncertainty. Research was clearly becoming subject to strident critique. On the one hand was the defence of scientific research, which long symbolised the intellectual calibre of the museum (Ames 1992). However, on the other hand, scientific research was considered a luxury and its affordability questioned. Certainly under the discourses of economic rationalism the fiscally responsible museum of the 1990s leaned towards the ideal that museum research cater for the generic visitor experience rather than small sub-groups of intellectual peers, who were seen to constitute an educated elite (Cossons 2000). Some scientific curators have managed to continue with their research and obtain government funding, but overall the role of research was reshaped to reflect the shift in the museum's business focus – customer service.⁴

Although I was obviously motivated to protect my own position, I could see a ground-shift occurring within the museum sector as a whole. First, economic restructuring was transforming the focus of the museum from research and collecting to serving the museum visitor. In the museum sector there was considerable debate surrounding the “purpose” of museums and their future direction. In the words of consultant Anne

⁴ Te Papa's strategy on the role of science-based and other research was published in 1996 entitled, *Speaking with Authority: Scholarship and Mātauranga at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, A Strategy*. Following from Te Papa's review of science research conducted in 1994 the purpose of the Strategy is to understand “how this institution might best focus and facilitate its research efforts in the future” and propose how best to “manage” research undertaken at Te Papa (Tramposch 1996: 1). The Strategy reflects Te Papa's corporate plan to be both customer focused and bi-cultural, however at the time of writing sources indicated that there was still scope for the Strategy to be fully implemented (Tramposch 1996: 3). At the same time the Auckland Museum similarly reviewed and cut back on scientific curatorial positions. Following a public outcry some of the positions were refilled but in different guises.

Pattillo, hired by Te Papa to assess the training needs of museum staff, “debate surrounds the balance between entertainment and education, between providing public information and conducting research, between collection development and whether a collection is essential to the function of a museum and art gallery” (1997: 24). Within this debate museum educators found themselves enmeshed in a deep set of tensions. On the one hand the shift in funding of their positions initially rendered museum educators vulnerable in terms of whether or not they had a job. Yet, on the other hand, the economically motivated emphasis on the museum visitor gave some sense of hope for the survival of museum education as an important function in the museum because of their expertise in providing “customer service.”

Second, underlying my political concerns to preserve the role of education in museums were museological ideals. I was one of the first graduates from the Post-Graduate Diploma in Museum Studies conducted through Massey University, Palmerston North, in 1992. Previously the Diploma was offered through the Art Gallery and Museum Association of New Zealand (AGMANZ).⁵ Transferring the diploma to the university was a method of centralising entry-level training for the new generation of young museum professionals in Aotearoa New Zealand as well as serving as a means for more experienced museum professionals to extend their knowledge base. The Museum Studies Diploma promoted the “new museology” as a principle of best practice that was emerging in museum literature in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally.⁶ In the early 1990s most of the Museum Studies students

⁵ The AGMANZ diploma was offered to museum employees in the 1970s and 1980s. The programme was developed and delivered by experienced museum practitioners on a voluntary basis. Students of the programme were allocated points to their diploma on the completion of projects assigned to each module (Pattillo 1997: 20).

⁶ Examples include Peter van Mensch’s (1989) edited book, *Professionalising the Muses: The Museum Profession in Motion*, which explores the idea of a museum profession and the shift in museum roles and priority since the 1980s in the Netherlands and the US. Similarly Stephen Weil’s (1990) collection of essays, *Rethinking the Museum and Other Meditations*, explores the idea of a museum profession in the US. Peter Vergo (1989), writing from Britain, discusses the concept of *The New Museology*. Written in the 1970s but influential in their discussion about the practices and techniques of museum work are G. Ellis Burcaw, *Introduction to Museum Work*, originally printed in 1975 and which by 1990

were already employed in museums and these studies signalled their ideological commitment to the “new museology.” Some diploma students experienced criticism from their colleagues and superiors in the museum regarding the necessity and appropriateness of the diploma programme; criticism was particularly strong from those who epitomised the older generation, academic-style model of the museum worker. Further, some museum directors believed that the diploma was “too theoretical and did not develop sufficient practical museum skills” (Pattillo 1997: 21). Museum studies students in the UK experienced similar criticisms.

I left the museum world in 1995. At this time, Te Papa, the re-incarnation of the national museum of Aotearoa New Zealand, was a goal for the future, “new museology” was new, and evidence of economic restructuring was increasingly visible throughout the museum sector. No longer caught in the day-to-day practice of museum work I developed a new eye. From my somewhat distanced position I observed the impact of change on my former colleagues and friends, most of whom were women. Since 1995, stories about their work experiences have been relayed back to me. In these stories I recognised some tensions between on the one hand the opening of possibilities, particularly in areas that focused on the museum visitor, and on the other hand concerns about the implications of economically driven changes, including the threat of job loss or the devaluation of specific museum roles.

To varying degrees all of the women I had informally observed or talked to expressed some unhappiness with their work, a significant portion felt their work was undervalued and with this had lost confidence in themselves and their professional skills. In some instances some women were philosophically opposed to the way in which their museum was changing and the manner in which their work role had altered to a point beyond recognition. Radical organisational transformation challenged the women both professionally and personally.

was into its 6th reprint of its second edition, and E. P Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, printed 1979 and which by 1989 was in its 7th reprint.

Several women were thinking about their next career move, balancing both personal and professional factors into their decision, but only one of the women I knew actually left the museum world. I wanted to know what, despite this rather bleak picture, held these women to the museum. I was struck by their passion for their work and their commitment to museums. Such passion and commitment was considered by museum professionals as vital for preserving their faith in their work. Such qualities were embodied by the research participants as the ever-present “eccentric trait” that was characteristic of the museum profession overall. This same trait, we shall see, was subject to stringent disciplinary measures under the new management model that shaped the museum sector in the 1990s.

Margaret Atwood (1980) in her novel, *Life Before Man*, perpetuates the myth of the eccentric museum professional. One of the main characters, Lesje, a white lab-coat, clad scientist, is presented as an extreme. Lesje’s whole sense of self and identity is defined through the museum. She would rather discuss in detail the feeding and breeding habits of the Pteranodon than think about the problems of her personal life (Atwood 1980: 238). Passionate about her work, Lesje can see no alternative place to make a living:

Uniformed in her lab coat Lesje descends, winding around the totem pole on her way to the basement. She isn’t doing lab work today but she wears the lab coat anyway. It makes her feel she belongs here (Atwood 1980: 307).

Throughout the novel, Atwood offers us snippets of Lesje’s life; her fascination for museums and dinosaurs in particular stemmed from regular childhood visits to the museum with her grandmother. She recollects her desire to have access to this strange world of prehistory and she also felt a need for a membership identity. As a child “she’s seen their lab coats as badges, of nationality, membership of some kind” (Atwood 1980: 307). Although the fictitious character of Lesje appears extreme,

nevertheless the stereotype that Atwood captures has resonance for those who are attracted to museum work. Yet, what happens when the fictitious character, the passionate, skilled and committed museum professional, who feels a strong sense of membership and identity with her work role, finds that the profession and organisation of her employment experiences radical transformation? Would she be oblivious to the changes and continue with her highly specialised work tasks? Or would she absorb the new management rhetoric as a means of adaptation and survival? The museum had changed before and was this simply a continuation of the museum's evolutionary course? This thesis seeks to capture some of the complexity surrounding the radical organisational transformation of museums in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Introduction

This thesis focuses on museums and the museum profession in Aotearoa New Zealand during a period of extreme structural adjustment. In particular, I examine the impact of economic restructuring, radical organisational transformation and the enlarged presence of women in the museum profession between the period 1984 – 1999 and investigate the extent to which these factors, in combination, point to feminisation. Broadly, feminisation of an industry sector has two easily identifiable characteristics, growth and decline. The growth is a significant increase in the number and proportion of women employed in a sector that is also growing. The enlarged importance of service work can partly account for the overall increase in women's employment in museums, but also as service work is often considered a "female dominated" area the implication of the amplified service orientation of museum work has led to its devaluation, or decline in status, which is the second factor of feminisation (Reskin & Roos 1990; Nesbitt 1997). Central to my inquiry is whether feminisation theory can fully encapsulate and explain the changes evident in the museum sector and the concurrent influx of women in the museum sector between the years 1984 – 1999.

Three themes run through this thesis and provide the foundation of the first three chapters. First, I explore the impact of radical economic restructuring policies on the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand introduced by the New Zealand Labour Government in 1984 and continued by the subsequent National Government from 1990 until 1999. In this period a distinctive strand of neo-liberalism emerged as the dominant paradigm shaping public policy and reforming the labour market in Aotearoa New Zealand (Peters 2001: 5). An important factor is the shift in employment from manufacturing to the service sector. This contributed to redundancy and unemployment for men working in the manufacturing sector and an increase in employment for women due to growth in the service sector (Bruegel 2000; Ministry of Women's Affairs 1998). These changes, in tandem with a considerable downsizing of the government workforce, through selling of state assets and restructuring of government-owned service providers, created a situation of high unemployment and an oversupply of labour (Kelsey 1995).

Although not examining specific government policies, I argue that a new business ethos has entered and shaped museum practice in unprecedented ways since 1984. Prior to that time, a common problem concerning the funding of the museum sector was fragmentation. The policies instilled by the government post-1984 sought to tighten the method in which museum funding was received and formalise the relationship between museums and their funding bodies, marking a radical departure from previous periods. As a result of these policies, museums have incorporated a new ethos into their business practice, affecting not only the way in which museums function as public institutions, but also the way in which museum professionals operate as public servants and experts in their field. In *Chapter One: 1984 – A Turning Point for Museums in Aotearoa New Zealand*, I examine radical organisational transformation within the museum, particularly the introduction of the new management model, which in turn has produced tensions within the museum sector as it shifts from a public service model into a public management culture of competitiveness and commercialisation. Interestingly, the radical transformation of the museum sector is not peculiar to Aotearoa New Zealand alone. Economic instability and restructuring is evident in other western nations (Kelsey 1995; Bradley 1999) and museums in these nations were likewise affected (Macdonald 1998).

Second, I argue that a stream of change was already occurring within museums in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally that was not purely economic.⁷ In *Chapter Two: Democratisation – “Bridging the Gap” Between Museums and the Public*, I discuss transformations in the museums’ conception of their public since the 1970s, namely in democratic ideals of improving public access, which involved increasing the museum’s popularity and serving under-represented audiences. In its various forms, the “democratisation” debate was a sector response towards criticism that museums were “ivory towers” and served only the elite few (Macdonald 1998; Jenkinson 1993). The debate at first centred on the principle of improving access to

⁷ When appropriate I draw examples from overseas museums, particularly in the USA, Canada, Australia and Britain.

museums, striving to become both popular as well as addressing the cultural politics of under-represented audiences. Questions were raised about the museum's right to represent different cultures and in Aotearoa New Zealand particular attention was paid to the relationship between museums and tangata whenua.

Although many changes have been made in the museum sector both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally since the 1970s to democratise museums, the financial crisis of the 1980s magnified the desire for popularity as the success of the museums was increasingly equated with visitor numbers. The ivory tower perception was ever more unpopular in the museum sector as it was a danger to funding and since the 1990s an ethos of commercialisation began to shape ways of improving access to the museum. Not only were efforts made to improve the quality of the visitor experience but also through emphasising "customer service" the museum's conception of the public had altered significantly. Importantly, problems still persist for museums in Aotearoa New Zealand, and new problems have since arisen. For example, consultation with under-represented audiences is often a long process and the results produced temporary or inconclusive. This consultative style of work practice is not favoured in the new management model of efficiency and performance targets.

Third, in *Chapter Three: Feminising the Museum*, I argue that increased emphasis on customer service in the museum has facilitated the transition towards a feminised workforce. My primary concern is with assessing processes of feminisation in the museum sector from a qualitative perspective, which includes factors such as a devaluation of the status of museum work and a decline in work conditions and workplace satisfaction. I also assess feminisation quantitatively; I draw from New Zealand Census data to illustrate the pattern of women's increased participation in the museum sector.

Factors that underlie women's increased employment in the museum sector include better access to higher education for women, the introduction of Equal Employment

Opportunity (EEO) programmes in the public sector in 1984, and the overall increase of women's participation in paid employment, particularly since the 1970s (Walby 1997). Yet these factors can only partially account for this dramatic increase of women employed in the museum sector. For example, US feminisation theorist, Paula Nesbitt (1997: 27) argues that a combination of external factors, like economic restructuring, and internal adjustments, such as organisational change, provide the conditions for women's entry into the sector. Drawing from newspaper and website sources, I identify points of resistance from museum professionals to changes in their work culture. Their concerns not only point to a decline in work conditions and workplace satisfaction but also provide evidence of how museum work has been devalued.

Investigating the relationship between increased levels of workplace dissatisfaction and the movement towards feminisation requires further substantiation and shapes the next three chapters. The rationale for conducting fieldwork and my method of analysis shapes *Chapter Four: Interpreting Experiences About Feminisation*. Based on semi-structured interviews with 17 mid-career (aged between 28–42 years) women museum professionals, the interviews provide useful data to conceptualise, describe and assess the effects of economic restructuring and the trend towards feminisation of the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. Chapters Five and Six describe the research participants' experiences of working under the new management model, particularly how the requirement to "become corporate" has altered their commitment to museums. Chapter Seven investigates the difference that gender plays in the museum, particularly for women who strategically chose when to be "more" or "less" female. In the concluding chapter, I assess the effectiveness of feminisation theory for assessing the impact of radical organisational change in the museum sector. I also consider whether the museum sector has completely transformed and thus identify continuities within the museum and the museum profession that predate the phenomena of feminisation. The final section of the thesis is a Postscript where I critically reflect on the research project and make recommendations for future research projects on the museum profession in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Chapter Five: Becoming Corporate explores how the research participants expressed their views about changes in their work roles and responsibilities since the implementation of the new management model and the drive to become corporate. Change from restructuring has occurred quickly, and often, dramatically. For most of the research participants, the museums where they worked were still in a state of change, in some instances museums appeared to be in continual change thus requiring a high level of worker flexibility. Furthermore, with the immediacy and continuation of economic restructuring and accountability expectations placed on museums, new skills and a whole different set of professionals have been imported into the museum sector, including managers, marketers and accountants. Museums broadened their employment criteria to encompass what museum professionals would consider “outsiders,” creating a dramatic cultural shift in the rationale of museums and the professional background of those who work in museums.

In *Chapter Six: Passionate About Museums: Survival or Commitment?* I describe how the research participants convey their daily work practice as a form of “survival.” They were surviving long hours, heavy workloads and experienced high levels of stress for low pay. While some of these factors are not in fact new to the museum profession what was most dramatic was how many of the research participants’ spoke of dramatic erosion in their confidence and ability to do their work. Despite these drawbacks, having a passion enabled them to endure the hardships experienced through the installation of the new management model and the restructuring priorities from the museum collections to “the museum experience.” There also appeared to be a lack of options of where else to work other than museums.

Chapter Seven: The Difference Gender Makes examines the research participants’ subjective experiences of institutional expectations to perform the feminised role of customer service. Importantly, such work expectations affect both men and women who work in museums, but in different ways (Adkins 2001). Some of the research participants had difficulty in being seen as “professional” or “credible” enough by their male colleagues revealing that even though increasing numbers of women are

employed in the museum sector there are continuing and entrenched patterns of gender inequality in the workplace. Women's performances of gender appear less flexible and bound within organisational contradictions based on traditional gender discrimination and sex-role stereotyping (Adkins 2001; Halford & Leonard 2001: 86-89), and thus provide evidence of continued unequal distribution of power between men and women within the museum (Bradley 1999: 211; Nesbitt 1997: 161).

In the concluding chapter, I examine the effectiveness of feminisation theory in relation to how well it conceptualises and explains the changes in the museum sector between 1984 – 1999 and makes sense of the ways in which a formerly male dominated sector has feminised (Walby 1997: 22) and ways in which it has not. Feminisation provides a useful framework for understanding qualitative changes evident in the research participants' accounts of their work experiences in museums. Factors include a decline in work conditions and value of their work since the introduction of the new management model, which promotes teamwork and the ethos of customer service, and altered the museum's work culture. However, feminisation theory alone cannot wholly account for the radical organisational transformation of museums and the historical origins of this change. Feminisation theory could not adequately address the tensions that emerged between the democratisation of museums and the commercialisation of museums; although the aims pointed in the same direction, to improve visitor access to the museum, the underlying philosophies were at one and the same time contradictory and overlapping. Nevertheless, locating the radical organisational transformation of museums in Aotearoa New Zealand within broader socio-economic and political conditions that have produced feminised labour markets offers a useful framework for understanding the research participants' experiences and interpretations of the new management culture and the enterprise of market-driven customer service.

Chapter One:
1984 – A Turning Point for Museums
in Aotearoa New Zealand

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I analyse the effects of radical economic restructuring policies on the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. The New Zealand Labour Government introduced these policies in 1984 and the restructuring programme was continued by the National Government from 1990 until 1999. As a result a distinctive strand of neo-liberalism emerged as the dominant paradigm shaping public policy and the labour market in Aotearoa New Zealand between the period 1984 – 1999 (Peters 2001: 5). Jane Kelsey argues that the extensive restructuring programme was based on principles of market liberalism, limited government, narrow monetarist policy, a deregulated labour market and fiscal restraint (1995: 2). Under the auspices of fiscal restraint, public accountability for government services was increased. The museum sector, like other public sector organisations, had to incorporate these changes. During a period of 15 years, museums and other public institutions within Aotearoa New Zealand were radically altered in the way they operated and in their focus. Although these policies continue to have significant impact on the museum sector I end my study in 1999. Marked by the election of a new Labour government the economic restructuring policies had matured in 1999 and like other “Third way” democratically elected, centre left governments the new Labour government’s focus was not restructuring but instead promoting a knowledge economy within a globalised market place. Public sector organisations like universities and museums are included within the knowledge economy and thus 1999 marks a new era for the governance of museums. Further, fieldwork commenced and was completed in 1999 and it seemed appropriate to keep the analytical framework within this timeframe.

1.2 A Radical Departure

The neo-liberal inspired reform of the 1980s effectively dismantled the welfare state which was established in the 1930s and which shaped social services such as

education, health, and culture, and the psyche of Aotearoa New Zealand's citizens (Peters 2001: 5). These neo-liberal policies altered the infrastructure of the state in two significant ways. First the citizens, or the public, of Aotearoa New Zealand were redefined as consumers. Second, public sector services, utilities and organisations, such as schools, social welfare, housing, electricity, hospitals and museums, were required to competitively sell their services to the newly fashioned consumers. In other words, welfare rights became consumer rights (Peters 2001: 5).

Under the neo-liberal economic reforms the welfare state and the public sector were systematically diluted, downsized and reorganised to reflect certain business principles of the private sector, namely making a profit, and a specific style of streamlined efficiency (Peters 2001: 5). The radical nature of the restructuring programme became evident when in 1986 some government departments were commercialised and corporatised, and later privatised. In 1987 the government started the process of selling a number of State Owned Enterprises (SOE) in spite of opposition from the public (Kelsey 1995: 323; McCarthy 1998: 42). Services sold included electricity, forestry, the national airline (Air New Zealand), railways, coal, insurance (the State Insurance Office), banking (the Rural Bank, the Bank of New Zealand and PostBank), shipping, petroleum and telecommunications (Ministry of Women's Affairs 1992: 4). Cultural organisations, such as Te Papa, could not be sold but they were placed under tighter economic-based scrutiny.

While not planned as part of the radical restructuring programme, a general economic recession in the late 1980s contributed to a vulnerable labour market.⁸ Census figures from Statistics New Zealand on the period 1986-1991 show decreased levels of employment, indicating large numbers of job redundancies, most of which were

⁸ Of particular relevance is the implementation of the Employment Contracts Act 1991 passed by the National Government, which dissolved compulsory union membership and replaced national award agreements. The Employment Contracts Act encouraged individual employment contracts and direct negotiations between employers and employees, thus reducing the long-held negotiation role of labour unions (Ministry of Women's Affairs 1992: 4; Kelsey 1995: 3). This change, in tandem with a considerable downsizing of the government workforce through selling of state assets and re-structuring of government owned service providers created a situation of high unemployment and an oversupply of labour (Kelsey 1995).

positions that were held by men (Ministry of Women's Affairs 1998: 87-89). Employment in the manufacturing sector decreased due to the government's commitment to lowering inflation, deregulating the economy and reduction in border protection on goods made in Aotearoa New Zealand. At the same time, and important to my analysis, Aotearoa New Zealand was making a transition from an agricultural and manufacturing nation to a service nation (Harfield 1997). In the labour market this meant having a specialised trade skill was less important than the generic skill of providing service (Harfield 1997: 169). The full impact of this shift to a service-led economy will be discussed in Chapter Three. For the purposes of this chapter I maintain my primary focus on the implication of the new economic framework of this radical neo-liberal restructuring programme on the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The change in economic direction was implemented in the State Sector Act 1988 and the Public Finance Act 1989, imposing a specific form of accountability in central government organisations in ways that were unique and distinct to the government's economic and social restructuring programme overall. Through these two acts a new model of management very similar to the private sector was introduced into the public sector, radically transforming both the sector's activities and infrastructure to a results-focused system where quantification of outputs became the benchmark for measuring performance (Ministry of Women's Affairs 1992: 4, 22). For example, in exchange for management autonomy, Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) had increased levels of responsibility, or accountability, for their department's performance (McCarthy 1998: 48). This was reflected in the CEO's employment contract, often short-term, offering bonuses for meeting projected outputs. The Public Finance Act 1989 embraced a very specific form of fiscal ideology that evaluated departmental effectiveness against private sector accounting mechanisms defined predominantly in terms of financial statements, quantifiable performance criteria, and operational efficiency (Ministry of Women's Affairs 1992: 4; Peters 2001: 5). Examples of cultural-focused public sector organisations affected by the State Sector Act 1988 and the Public Finance Act 1989 include the National Library, Radio New Zealand, Creative New Zealand and Te Papa (Ministry of Cultural Affairs 1998: 11). Te Papa

is the only museum primarily funded by central government in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The public sector in Aotearoa New Zealand operates at two levels, at a national level through central government, and at a local level through local authorities⁹ (local government). Thus, the introduction of the Local Government Act 1989 brought local authority accountability into line with central government as under the Public Finance Act 1989 (McCarthy 1998: 76), and with local authorities as the main provider of revenue for museums and art galleries in Aotearoa New Zealand, all museums were subsequently affected.

In 1996, the Local Government Amendment Act extended local authority reform and required long term planning for the allocation of public sector funds. Like the Public Finance Act 1989, the Local Government Amendment Act 1996 included the use of performance indicators to assess the effectiveness of expenditure and represented a fundamental shift in resource allocation (McCarthy 1998: 76). Museums, like all public sector organisations under these Acts, were required to

account to their funders (ratepayers) in a very detailed and particular way, and to justify their decisions in terms, which those funders are likely to accept. [Museums] must now be able to undertake the same type of multi-year planning and reporting and against the same background of accountability to the local authority's own funders as applies to the authority itself (McKinlay Douglas 1995: 9).

⁹ Although specific government acts use the term "local government," within the museum sector "local authority" is more commonly used. At times I use the phrase "local government," especially when discussing specific acts or policies, but when a choice can be made I use the term "local authority."

In other words, funding pivoted around how well the museum could account for their operations within the parameters of the “new economic framework” enforced through the implementation of these various acts.

Despite the economic reforms central government has continued funding the museum sector, which includes limited direct funding, primarily through funding the national museum, Te Papa, in Wellington, and its preferred method of indirect funding of capital development and other one-off projects through “arms-length” government agencies.¹⁰ Museums can obtain funds through a variety of government agencies, in particular the Lotteries Grants Board of Internal Affairs and The Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa (Creative New Zealand). Thus, the funding avenues of cultural and heritage organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand like museums were relatively fragmented (Ministry of Cultural Affairs 1998: 9). An unstable political and economic environment in the early 1980s precipitated a fiscally tight government policy, which affected all public sector services. In 1984 local authorities, central government and their arms-length funding agencies for the cultural sector were restructured. Museums were subsequently affected.

Historically, museums as publicly funded organisations¹¹ enjoyed a degree of autonomy in how their funds were allocated, how business priorities were set and how success was determined; this was primarily the responsibility of museum directors and board of trustee members. Local authorities on the whole were responsible for funding the museums and art galleries in their catchment area; in some cases funding was allocated through discretionary grants, often amounting to a single line in the annual budget of the local authority (McKinlay Douglas 1995: 36). Few if any funders asked for detailed information on what their museums did; even fewer museums provided their funders with explanations of the purposes for which the

¹⁰ Directly funding LEOTC positions was the exception to government’s and government agencies usual method of project-based funding.

¹¹ Appendix B examines in some detail the origins of museums and art galleries in Aotearoa New Zealand and their dependence on local authority funding.

funding was sought, the outcomes they hoped to achieve or the ways in which they would assess their achievement (McKinlay Douglas 1995: 8).

Prior to 1984 a common problem concerning the funding of museums in Aotearoa New Zealand was inconsistency in the method in which museums received and accounted for their public funds. However, since 1984 a new business ethos entered museums in an unprecedented way following from the implementation of the radical economic restructuring programme. In order to survive the newly introduced neo-liberal economic policies, museums shifted the basis for collecting, researching and preserving cultural heritage to incorporate ideals of “value for money” and accountability. The idea of “the museum experience” was promoted and members of the public were increasingly viewed as “consumers” (Macdonald 1998; Hooper-Greenhill 1993). How museums view the public has dramatically altered since 1984; reasons for this shift in part relate to economic factors, the focus of this chapter. Equally important are social, political and cultural factors that shape the museums’ relationship with their public, which will be discussed in Chapter Two. In this chapter, in light of the economic restructuring programme, emphasis is placed on the “strategic” introduction of a new management model and its rhetoric of accountability. I show the tensions produced within the sector by the installation of the new management model as museums shifted from a public service model into a public management culture based on competitiveness and commercialisation (McKinlay Douglas 1995). When appropriate, I make connections between how museums were funded prior to 1984 and how the economic policies, with their rhetoric of accountability, mark a radical departure from previous periods.

1.3 The New Economic Framework

One of the central factors to understanding the economic framework underlying the neo-liberal inspired restructuring programme lies in the distinction between public and private goods, and the public and private sector before and after the economic reforms. Pre-1984, private goods were considered to benefit the individual and therefore the individual should pay for these goods. In contrast, public goods were

considered to have an overall benefit for the community, therefore costs for these goods were met by public money, such as through local authorities or taxes (Gale 1995). The public sector referred to the government and publicly funded institutions and the private sector referred to the market.

Within this arrangement cultural heritage activities in Aotearoa New Zealand, like museums, were unequivocally classified as a public sector activity. Funding for museum activities – such as researching, preserving and exhibiting museum objects – were based on economic principles of market failure, meaning, “market forces will not deliver museum services with sufficient quantity or quality” (McCarthy 1998: 56). Nevertheless, prior to 1984 museum funding was relatively insecure. Much local authority funding for museums was “treated as though it were a discretionary grant rather than as a payment for agreed services” (McKinlay Douglas 1995: 36). This traditional form of funding meant that it was “relatively easy for local authorities to regard museum funding as non-core and subject to annual discretion” (McKinlay Douglas 1995: 36). Under this discretionary grant system museums often faced *ad hoc* reductions in funding, affecting the quality of service and the capacity for museums to plan.

Post-1984, under the neo-liberal economic framework, previous distinctions between public and private goods shifted. The provision of public goods and services came under the scrutiny of market-based analysis. Within the new economic framework local authority funded museums, like other public sector services, were organised around the principle of the funder/provider split. The local authority provided the funds and in turn, the museum specified the type of services offered, including details of the expected outcomes of the services, the method used to measure the performance of these services, and an outline of the resources needed to support these services (McKinlay Douglas 1995: 37).

Under the new economic framework traditional and long-held justifications for the “intrinsic worth of arts and cultural spending” were unsettled (McCarthy 1998: 59). In other words museum expenditure was quantified solely in economic terms rather than weighted on the social and community benefits of museum activities. Crucial to the success of museums within this new economic framework was the museums’ ability to absorb and integrate the same principles now shaping their funding bodies, utilising the rhetoric of efficiency and accountability as a tool to support arguments for the continuation of their funding (McKinlay Douglas 1995: 29).

Two museum sector entities, the Museum Directors Federation (MDF) and Taonga o National Services (ToANS)¹² commissioned McKinlay Douglas Limited in 1995 to assess the implications of the new economic framework on the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. The McKinlay Douglas Report (MDL Report) was in part initiated in response to concerns raised by museum directors, board of trustee members, and museum professionals about increased weighting on economic terms when measuring the museum’s performance. Pragmatic in character, the MDL Report is framed with certain imperatives, namely identifying methods in which museums could improve their services, increase their audience base and investigate potential income generating ventures (McKinlay Douglas 1995: 1). On paper the MDL Report is forward-looking and contains useful information about how the rhetoric of accountability can be utilised by museums in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The MDL Report argues that the challenge for museums lies in their ability to lay claim to their position as a public service provider using the terms valued by this economic framework (McKinlay Douglas 1995: 29). The framework promotes economic accountability through performance measurement, requiring museums to provide annual and long-term business plans and financial statements, and to project

¹² The origins of ToANS stemmed from the Department of Internal Affairs Lottery Funded Museum Liaison Services. Upon the introduction of the Te Papa Tongarewa Act of 1992 (???) and under the National Services division the four regional Liaison Officer positions were discontinued and replaced by ToANS.

the image of a “purchaser of defined services” (McKinlay Douglas 1995: 37). Reflecting a “value-for-money” framework, museums transferred their services into “business enterprises” and their activities into “inputs and outputs” (Hooper-Greenhill 1993: 17). In turn, as will be elaborated more fully in Chapter Five, museum professionals needed to think about their work differently, incorporating the idea of accountability into everyday work practice. Yet, another rhetoric of transparency and accountability was already happening in the museum sector, namely in democratic ideals of improving public access, increasing popularity and serving under-represented audiences as will be discussed in Chapter Two. Pertinent to this chapter is how the economic framework – with its doctrine of accountability – has produced tensions within the museum sector as it shifted from a public service model into a market-led management model based on performance measurement and customer focus.

1.4 The Management Model: Measuring Performance and Customer Focus

In 1996 with the passing of the Local Government Amendment Act a number of local authorities in Aotearoa New Zealand reviewed their relationship with, and requirements of, the museums they fund. This often resulted in a detailed review of the museum’s organisational structure. As the initiative for these reviews came from the local authority they were designed to meet their own objectives rather than the museums’ (McKinlay Douglas 1995: 9). Accommodating the dominant economic discourse, museums in response have carefully reviewed and rewritten their mission statements, which have become clearly focused on the museum visitor, and improved methods for measuring performance; in the process visitor studies and exhibition evaluation have become increasingly invaluable.

On the one hand, the desire to count foot traffic or collect visitor profiles is not new to museums. Tony Bennett and Neil Harris note that such studies were conducted by museums in the late 19th century in Britain and the US respectively (Bennett 1995; Harris 1990). From the 1960s exhibition evaluation and visitor studies in museums developed into a field of expertise, incorporating methods such as behavioural studies,

educational theory, cognitive psychology, and leisure studies (Screven 1990, 1995; Hood 1983, 1989, 1992, 1995; Falk & Dierking 1992). Exhibition evaluation and visitor studies enable museums to assess the educational impact of museum services, provide information about how people learn, and evaluate how the museum is viewed by the visiting public. Visitor studies also have the capacity to provide in-depth information about the “social, economic and cultural impact of the museum” (Johns 1995: 3). Incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods, visitor studies and evaluation provide museums with crucial information concerning who their actual and potential audiences are, and can assess the quality of their services.¹³

On the other hand, the potential for the museum’s funding body to equate high levels of visitor numbers as evidence of the museum’s success raises some concern. Noted in a report on the Australian heritage sector, *What Price Heritage?* (1990), where museums were facing similar accountability criteria to museums in Aotearoa New Zealand, the danger of focusing exclusively on visitor numbers runs the risk of reducing the museum’s performance around “costs per square metre of exhibition space and costs per visitor” (McCarthy 1998: 68). Whilst some museum activities and services, such as exhibitions and public programmes, often supported by an

¹³ Information from visitor research and evaluation enables the museum to market their services to specific audience groups and provides “evidence” in support of management and programming decisions. Evaluation is a mechanism for ensuring that the museum is spending their public money wisely and a key area of concern is that visitor or consumer satisfaction is high (Loomis 1987), ranging from research that focuses on learning styles (see Worts 1990, 1991, 1993) and the learning potential of the unguided museum visitor in an informal learning environment. In this vein, research has been conducted on the museum visitor as an individual/adult (see Worts 1993; Falk & Dierking 1992), children (Rennie & McClafferty 1996; Finson & Enochs 1987; Flexer & Borun 1984; Price & Hein 1991; Wolins et al 1992; Balling & Falk 1980), and family groups (Rennie 1995; McManus 1989, 1992, 1993a, 1993b; Blud 1990). Some museum research has focused on environmental psychology; for example, Bitgood (1989) examines how environments can be designed or improved from the perspective of users. Alter & Alter (1988) draw from cognitive psychology to explore how people learn and understand things (see also Dierking 1991; Roberts 1991; Falk & Dierking 1995; and Worts 1990, 1991, 1993); such studies are effective when trying to understand visitor’s knowledge, attitudes, expectations and misconceptions concerning the exhibition’s potential content for example (see Screven 1990). In their aggregate these studies assist museums to gain better understanding about their visitors.

aggressive marketing campaign, are recognised for their potential to generate a high profile in terms of visitor numbers and have transferred somewhat easily into the economic framework, others have not. Evident from the research participants' conversations in Chapter Four, collection management and conservation have a less public face and thus are less able to quantify their expenditure in terms of "costs per visitor," rendering these services more vulnerable to budget cuts under the new economic framework.

In other words, results from visitor studies can be used as part of the museum's accountability obligations to their boards of trustees and funding bodies, however not all museum services can be measured numerically:

Numerical performance indicators, particularly ratios, to the extent to which they are accurate and valid, may provide the best indicators i.e. true and easy, to busy trustees, accreditors, donors and others concerned with the integrity and accountability of museums. In order to fully engage key stakeholders in debate about the significance of the institution it is necessary to develop a fuller profile of the institution and view within the competitive local, regional, or national recreational and cultural market (Johns 1995: 20).

In turn, the MDL Report stresses urgency within the museum sector to determine their own performance criteria, based on museum-centred values rather than market values which means the less quantifiable services could continue to exist alongside services that can be readily assessed (1995: 9-10). Therefore the museum sector offers some resistance to the market model by incorporating museum sector led initiatives for measuring performance. Examples include the proposed introduction of a museum accreditation scheme to gauge quality within the sector, which would require developing both a common language for performance measurement and generating benchmark standards of quality museum facilities and services (Legget 1999: 10-14; McCarthy 1998: 22). The qualification, calibre and experience of museum staff is

another method for museums to display their commitment to quality (Legget 1999: 40). On the other hand, marketing their “competitive advantage” to the museum consumer as a destination centre is an example of how the museum sector has adapted to the market model (Legget 1999: 25).

Under the market-led model the museum visitor is viewed as a discerning consumer who chooses to visit the museum for a leisure experience as part of their discretionary expenditure (Legget 1999: 24). The museum “consumer” expects to be presented with a service that fulfils their requirements, whether enjoyable, educational or considered “value for money.” In turn, it is crucial for the museum to know who their publics are and their expectations. Once more visitor studies and market research enable museums to target niche markets to sell their products, exhibitions and services (Macdonald 1998: 118). Consequently, the museum’s audience profile is dissected and marketing strategies are put in place to take advantage of this information. As noted earlier, this involves researching patterns of visitation (Hooper-Greenhill 1993), researching ways in which people interact with exhibitions and construct meanings (Kavanagh 1996), and evaluating the overall museum experience both during and after their visit (Rennie 1995; Falk & Dierking 1992). Te Papa Tongarewa National Services has also actively contributed to this arena, publishing a variety of reports entitled *Museums Marketing Needs* and *The Marketing Mix: promoting museums, galleries and exhibitions* and resource guides such as *Know Your Visitors* and an *Introduction to Visitor Surveys*.

The “museum experience” has become the central marketing premise and has produced a twofold effect. First, it has changed organisational practices whereby museums have shifted their traditional role as a research and/or educational institution to that of a “destination.” Second expectations about who comprises the museum’s publics have changed from the scholarly minority to that of a “mass consumer” requiring a value-for-money leisure experience. Overall, services have been established to enhance the visitor experience. For example, a user-friendly image of the museum’s services and facilities is marketed using logos and slogans. Logos and

slogans also serve to package the museum as a “brand name,” which reflects value to the discerning consumer. Primarily the marketing focus is to enhance the visitor experience, increase visitor numbers and generate revenue (Macdonald 1998). Post-1984, most museums have retail outlets which sell quality merchandise to their niche markets, offer diverse and entertaining public programmes (films, music, performances, demonstrations, guided tours, workshops and lectures), and provide essential services such as cafes and restaurants, restroom facilities and secured personal check-in cloakrooms (see Legget 1999). The museum under this new economic framework has been packaged into a commercially viable cultural destination (see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998). This is evident through the proliferation of capital development and other projects throughout the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand as museums enhance their facilities for the public.

Capital development projects include the refurbishment or extension of an existing but ageing building or the construction of a new building. Such capital development projects often involve the upgrading of storage and air-conditioning facilities so that museums can accommodate the stringent criteria attached with international or national touring exhibitions. Other projects include the upgrading and refurbishment of permanent exhibitions. Throughout the thesis I use the term “project work” to encompass both sets of developments. Such projects have been useful on various levels, attracting new sources of funding in the form of grant money from the public sector, such as the New Zealand Lotteries, Creative New Zealand, and in some instances central government, in addition to attracting sponsorship from the private sector. In other words, the cycle of project work can temporarily alleviate or distract from any underlying financial pressure stemming from the continual reduction in museum budgets since the 1980s (Ellis 2001: 41). In addition, British ethnographer Sharon Macdonald comments that large exhibition refurbishment projects can also serve as a vanguard for new museum policy providing a key opportunity to incorporate new mission statements, business plans and managerial arrangements to ensure that museums become more “user-friendly” and “consumer orientated” (1998: 120). In Chapter Five, I develop the theme of project work further and assess the

impact this has had on museum professionals, namely in their ability to manage projects and work within tight budgets and time frames.

1.5 Conclusion

Overall the economic restructuring policies of public accountability and internal auditing mechanisms have irrevocably altered the museum as a public cultural institution. Within the framework of this economic rationalism, museums have become more commercial in both policy and practice and refocused from building collections to building audiences and generating revenue. Catering for the museum visitor has always been an important component of the modern museum's business, however the manner in which museums aggressively "outreach" to their public is new and the way the public views the museum as a "destination" is also new. Post-1984, museums have acquired internal organisational structures to ensure that they are able to sell their "products" to the museum "customer." In other words, the economic restructuring of the country and the subsequent radical organisational transformation required have led to a repositioning of museums.¹⁴ In the next chapter, I explore how the shift from research to the visitor experience was not purely economic; a long-standing movement of improving visitor access or democratising museums is evident in the museum sector and has been magnified by the stringent economic restructuring programme and its call for accountability. In Chapter Two, and throughout the thesis, I illustrate how the museum sector since economic restructuring is filled with contradictory and competing trends.

¹⁴ Repositioning museums has been and continues to be a popular topic for discussion and exploration for the museum community through a variety of forums such as conferences and discussion papers. One New Zealand example includes a collection of papers stemming from the 1995 Museum Directors Federation Conference in Wellington entitled *Repositioning Museums: a forum for museums, their stakeholders and marketing support agencies*.

Chapter Two:
Democratisation – “Bridging the Gap”
Between Museums and the Public

2.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to understand transformations in conceptions of the museum’s public in Aotearoa New Zealand. Whilst my overall focus remains firmly set on the period 1984 – 1999, in this chapter I explore strands of change that were already occurring within museums both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally prior to this period, and to accommodate this I broaden my timeframe. A rhetoric of transparency and accountability was already happening in the museum sector both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally since the 1970s, namely in democratic ideals of improving public access, which involved increasing the museum’s popularity and serving under-represented audiences. The museum visitor has always been an important focus for museums in both Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally, however the museum’s motivation to cater for their public has clearly changed over the decades. For example, the early Victorian museum’s potential to “improve” the manners and minds of the undifferentiated masses that visited the museum matched the philanthropic ideals of this period (Bennett 1995) and likewise, shaping museums in the period of this study, 1984 –1999, is the expectation that museums exploit their potential as a commercially viable visitor “destination” in a society where leisure choices are diverse and on the increase (Moore 1997). The reasons for this and the way in which the museum’s view of the public has altered are complex, and only in part relate to economic factors as outlined in Chapter One.

The overall purpose of this chapter is to outline how issues of democratisation, particularly the prioritisation of the museum visitor since the 1970s, overlap with economic factors as outlined in Chapter One. Since 1984, both public expectations of museums and the museums’ relationship with their public have altered particularly as museums adopted the new management model based on principles of accountability and in turn increasing emphasis was placed on customer service (McKinlay Douglas

1995). In the following chapter I investigate the link between economic restructuring, the prioritisation of the museum visitor and feminisation.

Three factors are considered in this exploration of the democratisation of museums. The first concerns an argument that museums were perceived to be exclusive, or ivory towers that catered to a limited public: middle-class, white and educated (American Association of Museums 1984: 19). In light of this anti-elite challenge, efforts were made by museums to become more “popular.” It was thought that shifting the level of information available to the public in a readily accessible format would solve the problem of elitism and exclusion that many museums faced.

The second factor concerns efforts made by museums to improve access and build new audiences, and involved heightened awareness that the museum’s role to reflect and portray culture was neither innocent nor inclusive. I consider two avenues of pressure from under-represented audiences; the first group concerns women and the second, Maori. On this matter I pay particular attention to the cultural politics involved in the relationship between museums in Aotearoa New Zealand and biculturalism. In the process I reveal not only that the notion of a homogenous public is fallacious, but also that attempts by museums to serve multiple and diverse audiences are not without problems; they are often inefficient, time consuming and the results are often temporary or inconclusive (Karp 1991: 12). Indeed in some circumstances under-represented audiences have obtained autonomy in re-presenting and caring for their own material culture through repatriation. Repatriation not only questions the museum’s right to hold or “own” cultural artefacts, but also through the establishment of community-led cultural centres in turn questions the idea of the museum (Mead 1997: 213; Lavine & Karp 1991: 1-2; Simpson 1996: 4).

Third, although many changes have been made in the museum sector both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally since the 1970s to democratise museums, the tight economic environment post-1984 in Aotearoa New Zealand spurred a crisis of

funding which increased the desire for popularity and in the process museums have become clearly aligned with other forms of commercially led leisure activities (Moore 1997: 19). Such attempts to popularise the museum runs the risk of diluting the intentions of democratically led “community” initiatives into market driven “niche markets.” Working with minority and under-represented audiences within an increasingly diverse community is a complex process, requiring trust and respect from both the museum and members of the community group involved. Depicting minority and under-represented community groups as a “niche market” commodifies cultural diversity and conceals a lack of significant change in the museum’s relationship with their publics (Moore 1997: 18).

2.2 “Bridging Gaps”

In this section I expand on the idea of “democratising” museums. Democratisation in a broad sense involves the relationship between museums and their public. I noted in the introduction of this chapter that catering for the museum visitor has always been an important component of the museum’s function. However, who the visiting public is and how museums serve various community groups is embedded within the broader cultural, social and political environment. The idea of a public museum and therefore a “visiting public,” is relatively recent. Stemming from the mid – late 19th century, the development of a public museum was marked by a change in “ownership” where the private collections of the Crown or wealthy individuals were transferred into a state-owned public collection.¹⁵ Previously access to these private collections was restricted to a very select, educated clientele; the state-owned museum was in

¹⁵ For a more detailed account of the Victorian museum see Tony Bennett’s (1995) *Birth of the Museum: history, theory, politics*. As part of his extensive study, Bennett explores the historical formation of the public museum in late 19th century Britain and its function for instruction and as a reformatory of manners. Similarly, Carol Duncan’s (1995) *Civilizing Rituals: inside public art museums*, traces the development of art museums as a place of public ritual and with this the particular ideological statements reflected in the building, collections and exhibitions. Duncan, like Bennett, focuses on the public museum; both focus on the Louvre and similar state-owned public institutions established since the 19th century. Whilst Bennett’s study includes museums and fairs in Britain and Australia, Duncan locates her study on art museums in the US.

comparison open to a much broader and sometimes uneducated public (Macdonald 1998: 12).

Although state-owned public museums did exist much earlier, such as the Louvre in Paris (1793), the transfer of ownership of collections into a “public space” was increasingly evident in the “Victorian museum.” Advocates of the Victorian museum in Britain, Europe and the US supported the role they could play as an instrument of public education, and as a reformatory of manners (Bennett 1995). As public institutions museums are visible not only as places to visit, but also as places that project certain social and cultural ideals on to their citizenry. As a colony of the British Empire, the early museums and art galleries in Aotearoa New Zealand were founded on similar principles to museums in Britain. Within each “national museum,” through the classification and display of the museum objects, narratives of western civilisation, colonial expansion and the nation state were promoted in the museum exhibitions (Duncan 1995: 3; Karp 1991: 16).

The tradition of western-centred narratives has continued to influence and shape museum exhibitions over the decades. Because of the museum’s “visibility” as a public space and in line with broader social, political and cultural movements of the period, the museum as an icon of western “high” culture has increasingly been subject to scrutiny (Lavine & Karp 1991: 1-2, 4; Ministry of Cultural Affairs 1998: 39). Since the 1970s, the role of the museum as a public institution, including their worthiness of receipt of public funds, and the extent to which the museum is “open” to the public, has been openly discussed and these concerns shape debates about the democratisation of museums.

Significantly the diversity of the democratisation debate and diversity of responses within the museum sector reshaped museum theory and practice, which were lumped together under a singular term “the new museology” (Vergo 1989). Within the broad scope of the new museology, the museum as a western, elite institution was critiqued,

instigating a version of the “crisis of representation”¹⁶ (Macdonald 1997). The crisis of representation filtered into other cultural and educational institutions, such as universities, impacting on the manner in which knowledge was constructed and disseminated. For example, questions were raised as to who could teach and concerning the power relationship between student and teacher. Educationalists and feminists, often both, began to explore and develop concepts of liberatory teaching practices and student empowerment. The work of Patti Lather (1991; 1992) and Liz Stanley and Sue Wise (1990; 1993) has been particularly influential in this area. Noting the power relationships between the researcher, the person who constructs knowledge, and the research participant, the person who shares their ways of knowing will be developed in Chapter Four.

Significant to this chapter is the way in which knowledge produced within the museum was seen to be contingent and “partial” (see Clifford 1986: 7). Based on humanist foundations knowledge was portrayed as a singular, true meaning yet under the arm of democratisation the museum’s previous unquestionable authority to construct and represent knowledge was considered both naive and inappropriate. For example historians with feminist and/or Marxist ideals started constructing alternative histories whereby the subordinate position of women and the working class were discussed in terms of power relationships within the state apparatus. In other words, the subordinate positioning of certain social groups was explained within terms of power based around a nexus of economic, political and cultural factors.

Within the museum attention was focused on redressing imbalances, the collecting policies and exhibition narratives. Significantly Gaby Porter, like other poststructuralist and feminist theorists, argues that knowledge is “positional”. For

¹⁶ For a general overview of the crisis of representation in anthropology see G. E. Marcus & M. J. Fischer (1986) *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*, James Clifford & George E. Marcus (eds) (1986) *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, and Norman K. Denzin (1997) *Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century*.

example Porter (1991) reveals how museum exhibitions often portray women as static, passive objects, while men are active subjects. On a practical level, strategies were put in place on how to document the life of working classes, lacking the means of their wealthier counterparts to acquire material objects such as ornate furniture and silverware, oral history projects have become an important tool to capture both snippets of daily lives as well as offering a diverse range of experiences and interpretations about “history” especially when juxtaposed with “official accounts” of history.

The new museology, particularly since the 1990s, encompassed a wide range of disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology (Ames 1992), cultural studies and museum studies (Hooper-Greenhill 1992). Debate focused not only on how to construct knowledge that advocated the possibility of more than one account of “the truth” but also put into question the role of museum professionals in constructing knowledge (Ames 1992). Museum professionals are part of the museum’s infrastructure and thus they symbolically participate in acts of domination by conceptualising dichotomous boundaries between the expert and the naive and what is considered worthy of documentation and what is not. In other words, the role of the museum professional is to create and legitimise cultural knowledge. In order to divorce themselves or redress such unintentional acts of domination museum professionals drew from a diverse range of theories.

Theories include poststructuralism, which focuses on the symbolic power of language and meaning. In essence, meaning is derived from its difference yet at the same time language and meaning are neither autonomous nor static, always shifting and open to interpretation. Both Pearce (1997) and Porter (1991) draw from the work of poststructural theorists such as Derrida; Porter pays particular attention to how the museum through its position of “neutrality” is in fact a position of superiority whereby certain knowledges are privileged at the expense of others. Black history, working class history and women’s history have been written in the shadow of western male positional power.

Foucault's work has also been utilised in museum literature, particularly the work of Tony Bennett (1995). Bennett reveals how the scientific, objective method of collecting and measuring material evidence was a useful method for organising the museum collections but also, intentional or otherwise, for disciplining both museum professionals and museum visitors. For example, the manner in which museum professionals collected, categorised and constructed knowledge stemmed from the discourse of scientific rationalism; these same ideals were used to support colonial and capitalist expansion as well as the philanthropic ideals of improving the tastes and manners of the working classes (see Bennett 1995). As a public institution the Victorian museum usefully served as a reformatory of manners shaping not only the museum visitors' gaze but also how they were to behave in public spaces. The visitors' gaze was educated to "see" particular notions of aesthetic beauty as well as how to read through the objects on display the exhibitions metnarrative. Organised on the principles of scientific rationalism the once primitive life of man had progressed in a linear fashion to their current state of technological advancement. Drawing from the work of Foucault, once more, objects and exhibition narratives were criticised for being organised on a particular hierarchy, as noted, men were privileged over women and civilised cultures were placed over indigenous cultures. Even today the "don't touch" and "be quiet" discourse shapes the informal code of museum visitor behaviour and museums are still experimenting with methods on how to move away from the Eurocentric metnarrative.

The practical methods utilised by museums and museum professionals to redress the imbalance between museums and their publics are not short of theoretical foundations. The new museology ensuing from the democratisation of museums is the focus for the remainder of this chapter. In this context, "democratisation" concerns the museums' ability to successfully serve their public. What prompted its introduction was the fact that, although considered public institutions, museums in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally have been known to attract a limited audience. For example, an influential study on art museum visiting in France

conducted by anthropologists Pierre Bourdieu & Alain Darbel in 1969¹⁷ presented the idea that cultural barriers deter people from visiting museums. As socially constituted places, museums, like educational institutions, reflect certain cultural values which “reinforce for some the feeling of inclusion and for others the feeling of exclusion” (Merriman 1991: 133). Introducing their concept of “cultural habitus,” Bourdieu & Darbel (1991 translation: 14) explained how museum visiting corresponds very strongly with both exposure to museum visiting as a family and increasing levels of education, both considered almost exclusively the domain of the “cultivated classes.” Macdonald (1997) describes the museum as a mirror or a receptacle of culture where museums reflect the cultural assumptions and resources of those who work in them (Lavine & Karp 1991: 1). Drawing from Bourdieu & Darbel, the “traditional museum visitor” has similar cultural assumptions to the museum worker. Conversely, if museum visitors do not see a reflection of their own self or history in a museum, they are likely to feel excluded and think the museum is not relevant to them (Merriman 1991: 136).

In order to reduce cultural barriers to visiting museums both museum practice and the philosophy of museums have had to shift (Simpson 1996: 1). Museum practice has inherited certain ideologies from the Victorian museum, where methods of classification of the objects and the encoded narratives in their exhibitions were seen to create exclusion by class, race and gender (Simpson 1996: 2; Duncan 1995), and for centuries the museum has been considered as being “elitist, overly didactic, dry, [and] impersonal” (Merriman 1991: 135). Therefore an understanding of how deeper ideological and historical circumstances have shaped the cultural habitus of those who visit and do not visit museums is required in order to either make museums more “popular” or to “bridge the gap” of exclusion (Merriman 1991: 129).

Museums since the 1970s and increasingly since the 1980s sought not only to become more accessible and educational but also fun. Science centres were particularly

¹⁷ Pierre Bourdieu & Alain Darbel’s study, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and their Public*, was first published in 1969, however I use Polity Press’s 1991 English translation.

successful for promoting fun, entertainment and learning through discovery with their use of interactive displays. At the same time, closer attention was paid to the relationship between museums and their publics. New ways were attempted by museums to not only present different points of view in exhibitions but also to involve different community groups in the production of exhibitions (Merriman 1991: 135). In other words museums and their staff shifted their authority as “producers of knowledge” to “cultural facilitators” by rendering their services, expertise and resources more available to the community and in the hope to build relationships with their communities based on tolerance, respect and an appreciation of difference (Simpson 1996: 3). At the same time, increasing numbers of community and indigenous groups in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally wishing to assert their political, cultural and social rights have challenged the museum’s right to present and own their cultural heritage (Lavine & Karp 1991: 1). The role of museums and the nature of exhibiting has become contested terrain (ibid.).

2.2.1 The Anti-Elite Challenge

In 1984 the American Association of Museums (AAM) released a report called *Museums for a New Century*. In this report the question of elitism was raised: “museums were perceived as ivory towers outside the mainstream of society” and as a result “their traditional authority was challenged” and “their relevance to society questioned” (AAM 1984: 19). The dominance and universalisation of “mainstream culture,” which privileges a single, homogenous (male, middle-class, heterosexual and white) western perspective and marginalises the cultural other has been contested (Tucker 1990: 7) and so too have museums in relation to their explicit and implicit positions in relation to these norms. Thus museums and their staff needed to reassert their commitment to and relationship with their increasingly diverse and fragmented public. For the purpose of this discussion my use of the term museum includes art museums and science centres however I limit my focus on their attempts to become more “popular.”

Since the 1970s, studies from Europe, Britain and the US on who visits museums consistently show that the “overall museum public are younger, more affluent and better educated than the generality of the total population” (Merriman 1991: 129). From these studies, it was evident that museums needed to capture more diverse audiences, those who are older, poorer, and less educated, in order to achieve the ideal of the museum as an “open” and public cultural organisation. The “blockbuster” exhibition has been one method to attract the traditional non-visitor to the museum and temporarily raise both visitor numbers and revenue through selling the merchandise that accompanies the exhibition (Jenkinson 1993: 88; McLean 1997). Equally important is the role of marketing where selling the museum product, such as education programmes or an exhibition, to specific audience groups was seen as a necessary accompaniment to making museums more popular or relevant (McLean 1997).

In turn, those working in museums attempted to shift the balance of power between museums and the public by lessening the museum’s authoritative role and promoting the role of education (Hooper-Greenhill 1997: 8; Moore 1997: 19). Museum education has always included formal curriculum programmes for students but expanded to encompass informal learning opportunities for adult visitors (AAM 1984: 71); so too, have ideas about where learning took place changed. New opportunities were sought both inside the museum as well as beyond the walls of the museum and into the community, taking not only museum staff and collections into schools, shopping malls, and libraries through temporary, or mobile displays installed in mini-trailers or vans, but also utilising different modes of communication, such as video, radio, television (AAM 1984: 55-71; Merriman 1991: 137) and the web. Even though the Victorian museum was concerned with public education in the desire to instruct and “improve” the new mass audience (Macdonald 1998: 12; Bennett 1995), ideas of the public and what they expect from museums have since been transformed from such paternalistic ideals. The challenge for museums remains in “knowing” their increasingly diverse and fragmented public and knowing how to cater for their increasingly diverse and fragmented needs (Hooper-Greenhill 1997: 6-9), which, as already noted, has required a shift in museum policy and practice but also in how

museums choose their staff. Knowledge and experience of audiences is increasingly required of museum staff. But also important is the need to employ people from different cultural backgrounds and genders in order to provide more diverse approaches to museum education and exhibition programmes (Hooper-Greenhill 1997: 8-9).

As noted in Chapter One, since the 1970s studies were conducted on how visitors interacted with the physical space of the museum, changes have been made in exhibition design and content in response. Exhibitions often provided less directed information to visitors, who were perceived as active learners, thus allowing for new forms of identity and subjectivity to enter the public exhibition space (Macdonald 1998: 14). In science centres the use of technology to provide hands-on learning experiences for museum visitors was used as an attempt to “bridge the gap between experts and the laymen” [sic] (Macdonald 1998: 15-16).

Although new exhibition strategies, including the use of “blockbuster exhibitions”, and the growing importance of education are increasingly employed by museums in order to address the anti-elite challenge, museums historically have been invested with an authority to “sanctify” art, culture, history and science (Macdonald 1998: 17; Karp et al 1992: 7). For example, art museums, while subscribing to democratic ideals of public education, are also aware of both “the increasing irrelevance of “high” art to most people, and the alienation this causes” (Tucker 1992: 14). The art museum on the one hand has been implicitly bestowed with the role of educating the public’s eye to discern quality, beauty and taste (Tucker 1992: 14). US historian Neil Harris comments that this highbrow attitude is longstanding in the US museum sector, where before World War I the US museum professional, usually from the upper class, presumed the authority to speak for others (in Karp et al 1992: 9). Since the 1970s increasing sentiments of anti-elitism within the museum sector (Karp et al 1992: 8) and from the public, in addition to increased expectations from their funders and governing bodies, require art museums, like all museums, to be more popular.

Making museums “popular” is an inherently political process. Writing from Britain, Sharon Macdonald (1998: 17) comments that those involved in making exhibitions are often “liberal in political inclination” (Macdonald 1998: 17), and museum director Peter Jenkinson (1993: 85-86) notes that the pursuit of making the museum relevant to a broad spectrum of people is a firmly held belief and passion for museum staff. This is certainly evident from the research participants involved in my study and will be explored further in the data chapters. At the same time such moves to democratise and render museums more accessible has attracted criticism from the political right as “these processes are thought to promote values that degrade the great works contained in museums” (Karp et al 1992: 8). On the one hand, moves to democratise museums questioned this type of authority long held by museums and on the other hand, moves from the political right have recently advocated for museums to maintain this level of authority. Because of increased scrutiny of the worthiness of museums’ receipt of public funds, museums, and particularly museum directors, cannot not be seen to be “too radical” or out of step with funding bodies and the broader public’s expectations of museums (Moore 1997: 21). In contrast, museum practitioners who commit to making museums more popular or relevant to diverse community groups are in turn widening the political issues that museums engage with (Moore 1997: 20-21). Interestingly, community development within the museum has been promoted largely by younger members of the profession in both the US and Britain (Moore 1997: 20).

In Aotearoa New Zealand Te Papa has certainly been subject of much public debate and criticism in its efforts to be “popular”. Relying on public funds Te Papa must be seen to appeal to the masses yet often at the expense of academic rigour; similar sentiments were expressed by some of the research participants.

2.2.2 Under-represented Audiences

Many studies have been conducted since the 1970s on how to prevent the social, cultural and physical barriers to visiting museums (Merriman 1991; Falk & Dierking 1992), including attempts to engage previously excluded groups in exhibition

development (McLean 1997: 76; Jenkinson 1993), as well as creating exhibitions where the visitors can make personal connections with the exhibition theme and the objects on display (Merriman 1991: 135). Partially spurred by the desire for museums to be accessible, through the use of interactive exhibitions, educational programmes, better museum facilities, and successful marketing strategies, the “museum code” has become easier to read and as a result museum audiences have broadened (Merriman 1991: 134). However, as North American museologist Ivan Karp (1992: 11) points out, “it is one thing for museums to try to broaden their audiences, and another for the public to claim the museum.” Increased pressure from under-represented audiences has contested the museum’s once unquestioned authority to produce knowledge and in turn highlighted the importance and necessity of providing different kinds of representation (Macdonald 1998: 14; Karp et al 1992: 2-3).

Intellectually, with the growth of post-modern and post-structural theories in the social sciences and humanities which serve to present multiple discourses that occur in a given social space (Denzin 1997: xvii), the museum sector was ready to experiment by presenting different viewpoints in the exhibition space. Two exhibitions, *Headlands* and *Voices* produced by the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (MoNZTPT)¹⁸ in the early 1990s provide examples of the diverse exhibition approaches undertaken by one institution.

In 1992 the exhibition *Headlands: thinking through New Zealand Art* curated by Robert Leonard of MoNZTPT and Bernice Murphy of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, served to celebrate the post-modern in Aotearoa New Zealand’s contemporary art. By rearranging and dismantling the traditional art history canon, *Headlands* sought to both encourage non-traditional art viewers to the exhibition but also encourage those more familiar to rethink their perceptions about art in Aotearoa New Zealand (Murphy 1992: 10). Within the gallery spaces the “uninitiated”

¹⁸ For a long time known as the National Art Gallery and Museum, then the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and in 1998, with the opening of the new building on Wellington’s waterfront the name was shortened to Te Papa.

museum visitor had little information to fall back on; in the museum shop there was a highly theorised exhibition catalogue they could purchase.¹⁹ Downstairs in the “history” section of the museum the experimental *Voices* (1993) exhibition illustrated a different school of post-modern thinking. Collaborative in approach, *Voices* chose to foreground women’s stories, working class history, and colonisation illustrated through the “purchase” of Maori land for the city of Wellington. The curators of *Voices* sought to deliberately marginalise the dominant, middle class, white male narrative. Both exhibitions received criticism from the public and for different reasons. *Headlands* was considered by some “too esoteric” and *Voices* “disjointed.”²⁰

Although *Voices* attempted to dismantle the dominant discourse by foregrounding “marginalised” subjects this was not without public backlash. Art historian Jonathan Mane-Wheoki writes that the Wellington public was not all welcoming of the “more conspicuous Maori presence, in personnel as well as exhibitions and displays [...]. One hears Wellingtonians say ‘oh, I never go to the museum now. It’s been taken over by Maoris’” (1995: 5). Due to the level of public criticism an in-house report was conducted on *Voices* and several changes made, which as a result diluted the exhibition’s intent to de-centre the dominant discourse. On a deeper level, questions rise as to how to embrace multiple and diverse audience groups without culturally appropriating them into the dominant discourse (Merriman 1991: 135), or how exhibitions, such as *Voices*, which attempt to de-centre the dominant discourse, can avoid being heavily criticised by the public and toned down by museum management. In this section I consider some of the pressures from under-represented audiences,

¹⁹ Mary Barr edited the exhibition catalogue to *Headlands*; details are listed in the bibliography.

²⁰ I was on staff of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa during the *Headlands* exhibition and left some time before the *Voices* exhibition formally opened. As an educator I spoke to many members of the public about their responses to *Headlands* and to preliminary installations of *Voices* and despite the desire to move away from a dominant exhibition narrative in favour of portraying alternative and contradictory viewpoints, members of the public experienced the exhibitions as “confusing” and “disjointed.” Some went as far as stating that they felt “lost” and wondered if they “did not have enough education” to understand the exhibition’s intended purpose. Such comments led me to reflect on the possibility that we are culturally conditioned to the idea of either/or viewpoints rather than an array of multiple and contradictory storylines that overlap.

particularly women, which question the ideological commitments implicit in the museum's reflection and production of culture. In the next section I explore the relationship between museums in Aotearoa New Zealand and Maori.

Examples of feminist criticism focus on the dominant male culture portrayed in the museum's collection and in the narratives produced within the exhibition spaces; their aim is to dismantle the dominant male-centred discourse (Porter 1996; Duncan 1995). For instance, Gaby Porter (1996: 105), a feminist British history curator and museum consultant, critiques the way women are portrayed in exhibitions in history museums: "the roles women play as they are represented are relatively passive, shallow, undeveloped, muted and closed; the roles of men are, in contrast, relatively deep, highly developed, fully pronounced and open." Similarly, Carol Duncan (1995), US feminist art historian, explores how women are represented as "subject matter" in the art works on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York:

The place is thick with images and representations. And most of them are women. These women, however, are almost never portraits of specific individuals. The largest number are simply female bodies, or parts of bodies, with no identity beyond their female anatomy. They have little identity other than their sexuality, and often, their low social status (Duncan 1995: 111).

Duncan also comments that a significant proportion of art works in the MoMA are by men, the "exemplary heroes" of modern art, with only a "token presence" of women artists (1995: 114-115).

Likewise, Marcia Tucker (1992), US curator and museum director, remarks how the work of women and Black artists held in art museum collections in the US are peripheral or subordinated in importance to that of white, male artists. In her analysis, Tucker concludes that "the museum and gallery world is still a closed system,

belonging to a very small group of people who are ever more defensively protecting their territory against the invasion of ‘outsiders’”²¹ (1992: 11), shutting out the possibility for richness, complexity and diversity in their collections and exhibitions. Importantly, even among those artists who are “outsiders,” including women, men and women of colour, Asian men and women, Hispanic men and women and so on, there are disparate views. Some, as noted above, wish to deconstruct the museum’s overall scheme of representation and even dismantle the museum’s sole franchise for exhibiting art. Examples include the establishment of community-based cultural centres, which embrace a diverse range of arts, including performance arts, or women only galleries. On the other hand, “outsiders” who wish to obtain a mark of legitimacy in the art world do not wish to deconstruct the art canon (Karp 1992: 2).

In this chapter my concern is not with the politics and implications of the growth of community initiated cultural centres or other alternatives to the museum (see Moore 1997: 22). Instead I focus on the politics of the museum space, in particular how museums construct knowledge and meaning about those outside the dominant discourse, such as women and minority groups, in “restricting and narrow” ways (Porter 1996: 110). In the context of museums in Aotearoa New Zealand needing to address criticism of cultural appropriation, particular attention has been focused on the museum’s responsibility to Maori and biculturalism through the Treaty of Waitangi. In the next section I focus on three issues relating to biculturalism: the question of ownership, definitions of biculturalism, and the employment of Maori in Aotearoa New Zealand museums.

2.2.3 Biculturalism

The way in which museums in Aotearoa New Zealand viewed Maori taonga in their collections shifted significantly following the success of the *Te Maori* exhibition. This exhibition first toured the United States in 1984 and upon its return to Aotearoa New Zealand in 1986 continued to tour major museums and art galleries and attracted “an unprecedented response from the New Zealand public” (O’Regan 1997: 6). *Te*

²¹ In this instance “outsiders” comprises women and other minority groups.

Maori was successful in terms of the large number of people in both Aotearoa New Zealand and the US who viewed the exhibition. But it was also influential through the impact of the opening and closing ceremonies, where the haka, waiata,²² prayers, speeches, and tears contributed considerably to a rise in Pakeha perception of the status of Maori culture both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally (Mead 1997: 207). The level of emotional engagement by Maori involved in *Te Maori* meant that the taonga was invested with mauri;²³ it was an awakening and a rediscovery of Maori taonga for both Maori and non-Maori (Mead 1997: 207).

Since 1984, following from the success of *Te Maori*, the way museums have handled, housed and interpreted Maori taonga has altered. Museums began to realise the importance and need to seek the approval, support and advice of Maori people about the representation, interpretation and care of their cultural property (O'Regan 1997: 6). Post-1984, ideas of biculturalism filtered into the museum's infrastructure, shaping the way exhibitions and public programmes were produced, implemented into staff training and recruitment practices, and importantly highlighting how the European sense of ownership of cultural property differed from Maori. Problems arise because the cultural ethos of museum ethics, practice and organisational structure is deeply embedded in western, rather than Maori, ideals of scholarship, trusteeship and ownership.

Maori and museums are far from agreement as to how each should relate to the other, and for that matter, [...] there are widely differing views, both within the museum community on the one hand and the Maori community on the other, as to how these matters should be resolved (McKinley Douglas 1995: 35).

Articulating and coming to an understanding between museums and Maori is an important step for instigating the museum's organisational commitment to biculturalism (Murphy 1999: 10).

²² Song.

²³ Life principle.

There is a strong bicultural commitment from non-Maori museum professionals, including those involved in this study. Bicultural politics fits with the liberal political view of the museum as an institution serves to preserve Aotearoa New Zealand's cultural heritage, provide visitors with meaningful and educational experiences, but also serves as a forum for debate where differences can be "safely" expressed. However, it is one thing to instigate national pride by elevating the status of its indigenous culture. It is another to address seriously issues of colonisation and racism. An important characteristic shaping bicultural developments in the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand which differs from museums elsewhere working with indigenous, immigrant or minority communities lies with the Treaty of Waitangi.

In 1975 the Treaty of Waitangi Act was passed through legislation, which in turn saw the Treaty as Aotearoa New Zealand's founding document. In 1975 the Waitangi Tribunal could only hear grievances of Maori people against policies and practices of the Crown that affected them after the passing of the 1975 Act (Kawharu 2002: 9). Ten years later, an amendment to the 1975 Act in 1985 "extended the jurisdiction of the Tribunal" to 1840 (Kawharu 2002: 9). Overall the Treaty of Waitangi Act and its amendment provided an opening for Maori to lay long-standing grievances through the Waitangi Tribunal against the Crown in terms of the Treaty's principles (Kawharu 1989: xi).

In essence the Treaty comprises three articles. According to the Crown's interpretation, in Article One, the Maori were to cede their sovereignty over Aotearoa New Zealand to the British Crown, and in return, as specified in Articles Two and Three, the Crown was to guarantee to protect the Maori people's culture, assets (land, water, air) and social system (Kawharu 1989: xviii). However, problems arise concerning differences between the Maori and the Crown's interpretations of sovereignty and protection; in addition the Treaty was written in two different languages representing two different world-views. In the words of I. H. Kawharu

(1989: xvii), “for the Maori, power was to be shared, while for the Crown, power was to be transferred, with the Crown as sovereign and the Maori as subject.” The Treaty challenges the museum sector in several ways, including, as already noted, the museum’s ownership of taonga, but also the extent of institutional authority over Maori heritage, and ways in which Maori communities could be empowered through access to museum resources (Jones 1994: 1).

In the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand differences between Maori and Pakeha still remain in relation to defining and agreeing as to what biculturalism means. Te Papa has a mandate as a national museum to work with museums in Aotearoa New Zealand, to encourage and promote improved museums standards and practices, including how museums can work in partnership with iwi and related organisations to promote bicultural development (Murphy 1999; Pattillo 1997: 47).²⁴ Te Papa attempts to fulfil these obligations through its National Services. In 1999 a commissioned study by National Services reported that differences between museums and Maori were evident in defining taonga, biculturalism and the implications of biculturalism for museums (Murphy 1999: 3). Even if *Te Maori* was successful in terms of prompting a revival or renaissance of Maori taonga and museums have since made some progress towards developing relationships with Maori, bicultural development is still in its infancy (Murphy 1999: 7). Certain recent examples that highlight problems associated with ownership of indigenous cultural property include the return of the meetinghouse Mataatua from the Otago Museum to the Ngati Awa²⁵ (Mead 1997) and the repatriation of mokomokai²⁶ (Simpson 1996: 178).

²⁴ National Services priority development areas include bicultural and iwi development, museum standards, training, marketing and promotion, and revenue generation initiatives (Hakiwai & Barnicoat 2002: 35-36).

²⁵ In 1993 the nine iwi (tribes) of Mataatua in the Bay of Plenty hosted the *First International Conference on the Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. The Conference examined issues associated with indigenous knowledge, cultural property and cultural resource management and from this emerged the Mataatua Declaration on Cultural and Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Simpson 1996: 207). It is one of the recommendations in particular which concerned the return of cultural property: “Indigenous cultural objects held in museums and other

The people of Ngati Awa loaned Mataatua for an international exhibition in Sydney in 1879. Mataatua was then transported to various other international exhibitions in Melbourne and London and eventually arrived in Dunedin for the *South Seas Exhibition* in 1925. Later the government gave Mataatua on “permanent loan” to the Otago Museum, all without the permission of Ngati Awa (Mead 1997: 215). The return of Mataatua in August 1996 is significant in the transference of a “museum object,” which had been subjected to museum processes of exhibition, care and preservation to the people of Ngati Awa for use as a meeting house, its original purpose.²⁷ This case was particularly sensitive as it renders Maori taonga held in museum collections in both Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere subject to repatriation if they had been acquired illegally (Mead 1997: 216).

The second example concerns the restoration and exhibition of human remains. Until quite recently a small number of museums in Aotearoa New Zealand had in their displays Egyptian mummies, fascinating to some museum visitors but not to Maori. To Maori, koiwi²⁸ and mokomokai are tapu and sacred and subject to many restrictions. Not many museums in Aotearoa New Zealand have koiwi in their collections and Te Papa is considered the most appropriate venue to house them because of its number of Maori staff and facilities dedicated to housing these collections (O'Regan 1997: 55). However, since the repatriation of several mokomokai from overseas museums to Te Papa, there is still debate within the museum community and among Maori about whether Te Papa is still the most appropriate venue for the mokomokai (Prime, 5 August 2002). For example the Mokomokai Education Trust, instigated by Maori entertainer Dalvanus Prime, would prefer to have mokomokai on display in an educational facility for people who wish to

institutions must be offered back to their traditional owners,” that instigated the return of Mataatua the meetinghouse to Ngati Awa (Mead 1997: 214).

²⁶ Preserved human heads.

²⁷ See Sidney Moko Mead (1997) “The Mataatua Declaration and the Case of the Carved Meeting House Mataatua,” in *Maori Art on the World Scene: Essays of Maori Art*, pp. 212-219.

²⁸ Skeletal human remains.

see their ancestors rather than have them locked away from Maori in a wahi tapu²⁹ section of the museum (Sunday Star Times 21 July 2002).

Currently it is up to individual museums to decide how to employ biculturalism in their organisational structure and business practice. Concern remains that:

the values of an institution are unlikely to change unless the people inside the institutions are exposed to a competing set of values or are working in an evolving relationship with members of different communities who bring different ways of valuing art and heritage to their respective positions (Jones 1994: 4).

Reflecting similar concerns raised earlier by Merriman (1991) and Fernandez (1991), Shane Jones (1994: 4-5) argues that until a higher number of Maori professional staff are employed in or involved at a governance level in museums in Aotearoa New Zealand, staking a position in the preservation and trusteeship of their cultural heritage, as well as raising the status of Maori working within museums, the impact and implications of a bicultural challenge remains in its infancy. Some museums endeavour to meet their bicultural obligations through employing Maori staff to work with Maori taonga. Another method involves the appointment of Maori to their boards of trustees; the board of the Whanganui Regional Museum and the Tairāwhiti Museum are two examples. However, problems arise as Maori staff feel thinly spread in their commitments and responsibilities, sometimes lacking the necessary training, resources or internal support to balance out their museological responsibilities with their often informal Kaitiaki³⁰ role (Jones 1994: 4; Pattillo 1997: 2). Maori working in museums in Aotearoa New Zealand often “became ‘trapped’ in advisory and/or representative roles without significant influence on operational issues” (Pattillo 1997: 2).

²⁹ Sacred place.

³⁰ Guardian or care taking role.

Further, if museums are to work effectively with Maori or to move towards becoming genuinely bicultural, it not only requires the employment and training of young Maori but also the involvement of Kaumatua.³¹ Young Maori working in museums can feel paralysed by the responsibility their museum position places on them whilst recognising that within their cultural community they require support from Kaumatua when making decisions concerning taonga (Jones 1994). This was certainly observed by the research participants who had Kaitiaki roles.

Non-Maori museum professionals are also placed in a difficult position when working with Maori communities as they attempt to balance Eurocentric museological principles that foster the preservation of material culture with “Maori philosophical or ideological debates” (Jones 1994: 10) concerning taonga. Thus in many instances it is appropriate to touch or, in the case of Mataatua, use taonga, and perhaps even bury taonga that are considered tapu such as mokomokai. In the words of Carol O’Biso, the registrar of the American Federation of Art involved in *Te Maori*, it would be difficult to find information in the registrar manuals that would support the view that taonga could be touched (1987).

Since 1984, bicultural policies have been implemented in museums and increasing numbers of Maori staff have been employed; yet at the same time such relationship-building with Maori is often conducted in piecemeal fashion. Incentives are still needed for Maori to work in museums to assist with creating a partnership between museums and iwi (Jones 1994: 5; Murphy 1999), yet facilities and funding avenues for Maori art and culture, like museums, have also experienced restructuring, downsizing and under-funding (Mead 1997: 229). A crisis of funding since the introduction of the radical economic restructuring programme in 1984 has complicated the museums’ relationship with their publics. First, museums need to meet their legislative requirement to become bicultural. Second, museums need to fulfil their long held democratic ideals by bridging the gaps with an increasingly diverse public, which includes questions of representation and knowledge production.

³¹ Elder.

Third, it is essential that museums meet their economic accountability criteria by being both popular and customer focused.

For example, Te Papa has a mandate to be bicultural: “with cultures working cooperatively, and provide an entry way and catalyst for people to explore and reflect on their cultural identity and national heritage” (Kelsey 2000: 8). Te Papa is also required to be “customer focused, putting the needs and expectations of customers first” (Kelsey 2000: 8). At the same time Te Papa is to “speak with authority through scholarship and matauranga³² Maori” (Tramposh 1997: 3) whilst being “commercially positive” by charging for a range of products and services” (Kelsey 2000: 8). Kelsey (2000: 8) questions the success of Te Papa, like other museums in Aotearoa New Zealand, balancing their various directives whilst recognising the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. The display of taonga Maori and the use of bilingual labels in museum spaces, the proliferation of paua and pounamu jewellery or kete³³ in the museum shops, and the proportionately high number of Maori in visible service roles in the museum provides a veil of biculturalism for the museum customer and does very little to address the uncomfortable story of European colonisation’s impact on tangata whenua or explain why issues of sovereignty are important to Maori today (Kelsey 2000: 9). In this final section I briefly consider the relationship between democratisation and economic restructuring.

2.3 *The Crisis of Funding*

Since 1984, a crisis of funding and pressure from their funding bodies and the boards of trustees for museums to be accountable in their use of public funds, has added a sense of urgency to attempts made by museums to “bridge the gap” with their public. In some ways the need for museums to be both more popular and more accessible dovetails with the economic changes outlined in Chapter One. Karp points out that historically “the impetus for museums to change” their attitudes, philosophy and direction “has often been economic” (1992: 9). Nevertheless, I wish to point out that

³² Knowledge.

³³ Woven basket.

while moves to democratise museums have certainly been economically motivated, there are also some tensions between the directives of economic-based accountability and democratisation, in that visitor numbers outweigh democratic ideals of improving access and creating transparency in how the museum constructs and exhibits culture. Significantly, under the auspices of the new management model the view of the museum's public has shifted, as noted in Chapter One, from that of a citizen to that of consumer or customer, and decisions about the museum's products and services, whether exhibitions, public programmes, research or conservation, are made with the museum customer in mind (Macdonald 1998: 118).

Thus under the auspices of the market model specific pressures have been placed on the museum and museum professionals on how to conduct their relationships with their publics, referred to as "consumers" or "stakeholders." Since the introduction of the market model how knowledge is produced has shifted, once conducted in the backrooms of the museum away from the museum visitor, to its dissemination specifically in response to market forces where the museum product is "exhibited in the public space of the museum for public consumption" (Urry 2002: 38). Within the framework of what is described as the old "product driven" model for museums, museum professionals were autonomous in that they engaged with the museum's objects in the manner in which they saw fit. Knowledge was presented to the public, primarily through exhibitions and their supporting public programmes, in the form of giving the public what was "good" for them (Macdonald 1998). In contrast is the idea of museums being "market-led" (Macdonald 1997; McKinlay Douglas 1995). Here the museum's public hold weight over the dissemination of the production of knowledge in so far as under the market model the public as a "consumer" expects "value for money" from their museum experience. In terms of the museum experience the museum shop and cafe are equally as important as the quality and entertainment value of the exhibition (McKinlay Douglas 1995).

In the context of "product driven" museum practice, museum professionals had considerable status by virtue of their expertise, whereas within the "market-led"

model these same experts perform as service providers. Within this later model it is the customer who is “always right” (Ames 1992: 11) and subsequently the authority of the expert museum professional is altered to accommodate the “feminine” role of customer service. What this means in terms of the museum professional, in all areas of the museum, is that their work is defined in terms of providing service. Museum professionals are valued for and required to obtain new sets of skills to fulfil this service role. What we are discussing here is not simply a shift to a service economy that has become characteristic of late capitalism but rather the systematic process of feminisation. This point will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

With the instigation of new managerial practices the project for democratising museums still continues, yet producing programmes and services for a mass audience and under-represented audiences requires different investments in terms of funding. Addressing criticisms of cultural appropriation, marginalisation, colonisation and discrimination involves the museum in the often lengthy and inconclusive process of consultation with members of under-represented community groups. If the museum were wholly to follow democratic ideals of accountability and transparency the economic-based demands of the new management model would consider such consultation wasteful of the museum’s limited resources and futile because of its inability to produce conclusive results.

The crisis of funding since 1984 has influenced museums to draw in more people, particularly since visitor numbers are often seen as a solution to increased pressure for economic-based accountability. As noted, under the new management model, museum professionals now understand their public in terms of funding and with this their commitment lies with providing “customer service” and “value-for-money” experiences for their public. The role of marketing and visitor studies has also increased since the crisis of funding of the 1980s. Visitor studies detail not only the number of visitors to an exhibition or programme but also the demographic characteristics of their visiting public and thus provide proof that museums are remaining relevant to their publics. “Blockbuster” exhibitions serve a dual purpose

for museums as they boost overall visitor numbers, sometimes attracting new audiences, and generate revenue from the sale of merchandise accompanying the exhibition.

On one hand, the idea of popular exhibitions, portraying accessible information targeted at a mass audience, may enable the museum to obtain revenue through admission charges and corporate sponsorship, both increasingly important since the crisis of funding. Democratisation in terms of increasing broader popular appeal works well with the new management model. On the other hand, this approach can undermine the museum's other democratic goal of reaching out to under-represented audiences within the community. Whilst niche-market exhibitions, in terms of working with community groups to create a community-focused exhibition partly address the problem, such case-by-case approaches are time-consuming and create heavy demand on museum resources in building a relationship with the community and having staff with sufficient experience and knowledge to work with each community group (Cox & Singh 1997). Occasionally an exhibition can be popular as well as bringing in a large portion of an under-represented audience. The *Te Maori* exhibition of 1984 was certainly successful on this level. However questions are raised as to whether the museum has sufficient resources and commitment to continue the relationship with various community groups *after* the exhibition.

In a public lecture in Wellington, American museologist Elaine Heumann-Gurian stated that it has become increasingly evident that instead of trying to be all things to all people museums need to "rationalise" their mission and focus (in Smith 2002: 47). Among the options are being either "client" or "customer centred," or community focused, not both (also see Moore 1997: 22). I still argue that regardless of the museum's choice to be a customer-centred leisure destination where culture is sold, like Te Papa, or to modernise their exhibits yet remain a traditional museum where knowledge is the commodity, like the Auckland War Memorial Museum, museums are still operating within the same cultural logic of the management model. For example in both institutions economic accountability is met as revenue is generated

through admission charges, merchandise, refreshments and entertainment zones; visitor numbers and demographics are carefully collated; budgets are set, and exhibitions target certain audience groups. As noted previously, by targeting niche markets, which includes under-represented community groups, the museum is seen to be “democratic.” However in regard to museums in Aotearoa New Zealand being democratically accountable by genuinely adopting bicultural policies, “it is not only a matter of encouraging Maori to come into the museum community but for the museum to become part of the Maori community.” (Murphy 1999: 14). This, as noted previously by Kelsey (2000), would require the museum to operate within two worldviews, western and Maori with less attention spent on obtaining popular appeal and more attention paid to issues of sovereignty and colonisation within the context of the museum.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed various ways in which museums’ conception of their public have altered since the 1970s. The museum visitor has always been important to the museum but the motivation to cater for their public has altered significantly. First, stemming from criticism of elitism, museums focused on broadening their audience base in an attempt to become more popular. Second, because the museum’s public is increasingly diverse, attention was paid to building new audiences, particularly marginalised and under-represented audiences. At the same time increased pressure from these same marginalised and under-represented groups brought new sets of problems to the museum and concerned the museums’ assumed right to hold, portray and exhibit culture. Third, since the 1980s, pressure for economic accountability has been overlaid with the museum’s democratic commitment; under-represented and minority audiences have become “niche markets” and creating popular appeal has been seen as an opportunity for revenue generation. Significant to this study is how democratic ideals of accessibility and economic ideals of accountability both prioritise the museum visitor. Within debates of democratisation the focus is on the museum building relationships with diverse audiences. Under the market-led model the museum visitor becomes a museum customer. In the chapter that follows I discuss the

relationship between the increased emphasis on customer service, the inordinate increase in women's employment in the museum sector and feminisation.

Chapter Three:

Feminising the Museum

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I consider ways in which the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand has feminised within a relatively short period of time. Drawing from Census data from 1966-1996 I show evidence of a marked increase in the number and ratio of women employed in the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. I am also interested in exploring a concern that associates the rise in the number and proportion of women employed in a particular occupation with a decline in status of that work. By exploring case studies that appeared in the media, I discuss instances of what museum professionals perceive to be a decline in their work status and a decline in their employment conditions. Pertinent to this chapter is the relationship between the proportional increase of women's employment in the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand and changes within the nature of museum work that stemmed from economic restructuring under the auspices of the new management model as discussed in Chapter One. But first we need to delve into the general literature about the processes of feminisation and work in their broadest sense.

3.2 Processes of Feminisation

Factors contributing to women's overall increased participation in the labour market since the 1970s are better access to higher education and work training opportunities for women, and anti-discriminatory legislation such as the introduction of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act (EEO) in the public sector in 1984 (Ministry of Women's Affairs 1992). However it is the conditions that have allowed for and the implications of this inordinate rise of women's participation in the labour market that interest feminisation theorists.

Harriet Bradley and other feminisation theorists refer to feminisation as a culmination of factors. In this chapter and throughout the rest of the thesis, feminisation is used in

three ways. First, it is used to refer to the “feminisation of the labour market,” in other words a rapid and substantial increase in the number and proportion of women in paid work (Bradley 2000: 73).

The second use is to account for the trend towards women moving into occupations previously dominated by men, thus termed the “feminisation of occupations.”

US feminisation theorists, Paula Nesbitt (1997: 27) and Barbara F. Reskin & Patricia A. Roos (1990) argue that changes in both market and labour conditions provide the foundation for women’s entry into an occupational group and/or sector. Conditions may include a shortage in the male supply of labour, for example when a traditionally male dominated sector experiences dramatic growth, the demand for labour is met by admitting previously excluded groups such as women (Reskin & Roos 1990: 42).

This is what Reskin & Roos refer to as “queuing theory” (p.42) and has led to the feminisation of relatively high-end jobs such as banking, teaching at secondary and tertiary level, accountancy, real estate and the clergy, all occupations that were once the sole territory of men. However, women have gained entry in the labour market for a variety of reasons other than sector growth and a shortage in supply of male labour (Reskin & Roos 1990: 40) particularly since the radical economic reforms of the 1980s.

In the 1980s increased economic pressure within the household combined with “great social pressures on women to be earners have heightened their work commitment and ambitions to succeed in their careers” (Bradley 1999: 9). There has been a marked movement of women into professions traditionally dominated by men, such as law, medicine and management. As noted, better access to education opportunities where women could use the “qualifications leverage” to gain work (Bradley 2000: 2; Chiu & Leicht 1999), and broader social changes such as Equal Employment Opportunity programmes have also contributed to women’s entry into these fields. This trend has not applied equally to all professions, however; numbers of women involved in engineering and the sciences are still comparatively low. This trend of women entering into male dominated professions is most noticeable for younger women, who

in contrast to generations before them have better access to education and expect to work (Walby 1997). Again, this is most evident for tertiary educated women who have obtained employment into what have traditionally been considered high status professions (Chiu & Leicht 1999), which arguably includes museums.

The third use of feminisation refers to the “feminisation of work”, whereby both women and men are required to perform the “feminine role” of service work. Since the 1980s there has been there has been a shift in most western economies from manufacturing to the service sector. As Harriet Bradley notes, “the loss in manufacturing jobs has had a disproportionate effect on men and has been associated with redundancy, unemployment and early retirement” (2000: 75). Service work has traditionally been the realm of women; it typically attracts a lower rate of pay, is often part time, and is reliant on “feminine” skills such as “emotional labour” (Adkins 2001). While women still dominate the service sector, in light of the dwindling manufacturing economy men have moved into this sector and are subject to the same labour conditions as women (Bradley 1999).

As women have a long-standing subordinate position in western society it comes as no surprise that “feminisation” has negative connotations. In recently feminised occupations and/or sectors such as clerical work, retail, catering, the health and education professions (Bradley 2000: 75), and the legal profession (Chiu & Leicht 1999) workers are reportedly experiencing high levels of stress and with this stress-related illness (Bradley 1999: 217) as well as increased levels of workplace dissatisfaction (Chiu & Leicht 1999). These factors contribute to a decline in the value of the work itself (Reskin & Roos 1990). Further, when gender segregation is considered we can see that while some occupations and work practices have feminised, the culture of work in many fields’ still privileges men (Bradley 2000: 90-91). For example, despite the existence of EEO programmes, gender equality has not been achieved in the work force; women continue to be paid less than men (Gordon & Morton 1991), women who are qualified are still under-represented in top management positions (Marshall 1995), un-educated women are still relegated to low-

paid service work (Bradley 2000: 89) and working women are still lumped with the “second shift” in the home. As Nesbitt states;

Occupational feminization [...] has been shown to be part of the larger socioeconomic concerns that involve organizational shifts and restructuring. Although structures may have changed in response to pragmatic socioeconomic need, the processes have held constant the dominance of those currently in power (1997:161).

Overall then, the concepts of “feminisation” explored in this section take into account the dramatic increase in the number and ratio of women employed in the museum sector overall and “curatorial”³⁴ positions specifically. Thus in part feminisation marks quantitative change however there are also qualitative factors that need to be considered. In addition, organisations such as museums are placing greater emphasis on “customer service” where the “feminine qualities of caring, communicating and making people feel good are important employment assets” (Bradley 2000: 78). The feminisation of work usefully explains how under the new management model as discussed in Chapter One, museum professionals are increasingly required to perform the feminine role of “customer service” in addition to their specialised museum roles.

This shift has been subtle and not all museum professionals are against such changes as they advocate the importance of museums relationship with their publics as noted in Chapter Two. However it is the subjective and qualitative factors such as a perceived loss of professional autonomy, stressful work conditions, and low work satisfaction which in their aggregate point to the systematic devaluation of museum work, and that theorists such as Reskin & Roos (1990) and Nesbitt (1997) argue are part of the process of feminisation. In other words, by the time substantial numbers of women have gained access to employment in an occupation and/or a sector, these occupations have devalued.

³⁴ For the purposes of this chapter “curatorial” positions include most museum professional positions such as museum directors, educators, collection managers and conservators.

3.3 *Women at Work*

If women are deemed to have less economic and political currency in the marketplace despite legislation that promotes EEO and prohibits discrimination in the workplace then other factors need to have contributed to allow for an occupation to “open up” to women. In this section I will step back a little from my thesis time frame to examine patterns of women’s employment prior to 1984 as discussed by feminisation theorists in relation to macroeconomic conditions and the role of gender-segregation in the workplace.

One useful theory, as noted earlier in this chapter, is Reskin & Roos “queuing theory” (1990: 42). Their model draws on the idea of labour queues and job queues. Labour queues order groups of workers in terms of their use to employers, and job queues rank jobs in terms of their appeal to workers (Reskin & Roos 1990: 29). Following the work of earlier social scientists, Reskin & Roos explain that labour queues rank by both gender and race with men over women and white over “others” (1990: 30). When there is a mismatch in the number of jobs and workers, employers must fill some of the better-ranked jobs with workers from a lower-ranked position in the labour queue (Reskin & Roos 1990: 31). In other words, labour markets are subject to basic economic principles of supply and demand. There have been times when women have been actively encouraged into the work force due to a radical shortage of male labour, such as during the Second World War, and then been forced out of their jobs when men returned from service and needed to re-enter the workplace. However, my main concern is with factors that have contributed to the systematic and continual increase in the number and ratio of women’s presence in the labour market rather than temporary shifts.

Feminisation theorists argue that two types of successive economic regimes have contributed to the feminisation of the labour force. The first period was from 1945 – 1960s, a time of economic growth and stability, and the second, post 1980s, was a period of economic crisis and restructuring (Hagen & Jenson 1988: 7). These

economic periods have affected all industrialised western nations such as Aotearoa New Zealand, Britain, Australia, the US and western European states, and have had a significant effect in shaping the workforce. From post-1945 until the late 1960s economic growth was shaped by mass consumption where commodities were protected by government tariffs and consumers were protected to varying degrees by the welfare state. In Aotearoa New Zealand, components of the welfare state included social services such as family benefits, unemployment benefits, the provision of free health care and education, and subsidies for the provision of child care and care for the elderly. Such state funded social services in part enabled women to enter the workforce. Further, expanding educational opportunities encouraged younger women to consider education and employment prospects not previously available to their mothers, while “the expansion of the public sector was a major source of job opportunities for women because so many of them were in the area of care-giving and social services long associated in popular discourse with ‘feminine’ talents” (Hagen & Jenson 1988: 8; Walby 1997). Women were cheaper to employ than men because they were considered to be supplementary earners; whether in reality they were actually primary wage earners was irrelevant in economic terms. Women often worked part time and thus were less likely to be eligible for employee fringe benefits such as holiday and sick leave and superannuation schemes; they were also less likely to be involved in trade union activities (Walby 1997; Bradley 1999).

As a result, as service oriented jobs such as caring and “support” roles grew in both the public and private sector, so too did women’s employment. Although women were evidently entering the workforce and were there to stay, the labour market remained highly segregated; women were often confined to “female ghettos” of unskilled, part-time repetitive work or lowly paid support roles (Hagen & Jenson 1988: 9). In the semi-professions women were once more located in service-oriented work such as nursing, teaching, librarianship and as we shall see, museums.

3.4 *Museum Women*

In this section I focus on the quantitative increase of women’s employment in museums in Aotearoa New Zealand with specific emphasis placed on the occupational

category “curator.” Drawing from Statistics New Zealand census figures and a jointly written document by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and Statistics New Zealand (1998), *Employment in the Cultural Sector*, I show the dramatic increase in the number and ratio of women employed in the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand within the thirty-year period 1966-1996. At the same time I draw from international literature, primarily from the US, in order to show how the pattern of women’s increased employment in the museum sector is not peculiar to Aotearoa New Zealand, and in fact is closely related to the transformation of museums in late capitalist society. In order to assess shifts in the pattern of women’s employment in the museum sector between 1966 – 1996, I first focus on women’s employment in museums prior to the 1970s to set the context.

Prior to the 1970s, the museum profession was a male dominated terrain. Although women were employed in museums, this was not in significant numbers. For example, Kendall Taylor (1994: 12), in her historical account of women’s employment in museums in the US in the early 20th century, argues that women’s early involvement in museums reflected wider social expectations of women’s role in the domestic sphere. If women worked in museums they tended to be employed in educational or record-keeping roles, such as registration³⁵ work, or as assistants (Taylor 1994: 12). Further, as women had limited access to obtaining the credentials and experience necessary for the more specialised and professional museum roles, such as curatorial and director positions, these positions usually went to men (Taylor 1994; Haraway 1989). Because women lacked the necessary credentials,

[t]hey were viewed as generalists and amateurs – enthusiastic in their endeavours but not truly professional. In museums, professionalism meant having highly specialised training, and before 1960 only a small percentage of women had that. When women did pursue advanced degrees and obtain higher positions, they often lacked the degree of authority given to men, which was necessary to perform leadership jobs (Taylor 1994: 12).

³⁵ Registration work is increasingly called collection management.

Women's employment in museums throughout most of the 20th century until the 1970s reflect what Reskin & Roos (1990: 39-42) describe as the "queuing" theory in that women were employed when there was a shortage of sufficiently qualified men. For example, British history curator Gaynor Kavanagh (1991: 45) observed that between the two World Wars women's involvement in the museum sector increased primarily because of male conscription; women were needed to fill the positions rapidly being vacated by men. R.K. Dell (1965: 15), writing about the Dominion Museum in Wellington, noted a similar development, and once established, this trend continued.

Overall, museums both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally prior to the 1970s employed only a small number of professional staff; at most employing a museum director, a curator and occasionally assistants, all of which have been predominantly men (Taylor 1994: 21). With such a small staff, museums were propped extensively by an educated volunteer labour force. This is most evident in the US and with museums of art for two reasons (Taylor 1994: 13). First, US museums were heavily reliant on private funds and needed the involvement and financial support of wealthy individuals. Second, there was some "stigma in accepting compensation for cultural work" (Taylor 1994: 12) and again, only wealthy individuals who did not need to work for an income could afford to donate their time without compensation. For example, prestigious institutions such as the (then) Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston were founded on the pioneering efforts of women as collectors and benefactors (Taylor 1994: 13). Once founded, their volunteer labour continued with these institutions.

Since the 1970s, museums in both Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally have grown, and with that growth has come changes in the museum labour force. Museums have grown in size and scope, requiring both larger buildings and increased numbers of specialised staff. In the thirty-year period 1966-1996, the museum sector

in Aotearoa New Zealand not only grew but also shifted from being clearly a male-dominated sector in 1966 to a sector which in 1996 showed a more equitable pattern between men's and women's employment. By 1996, 55 percent of museum employees were women. Both sector growth and higher levels of women's employment in the labour market overall have contributed to women's increased employment in the museum sector.

Table 1 below shows both men's and women's participation in both the workforce in general and in the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand from 1966-1996. Women's participation in the workforce increased from under 30 percent in 1966 to 45 percent in 1996. Women's rate of participation in the museum sector was slightly higher than in the overall workforce, increasing from just under 35 percent in 1966 to 55 percent in 1996.

Table 1: Employment in the Workforce and the Museum Sector in Aotearoa New Zealand According to Gender, 1966-1996³⁶

| Year | Workforce | | | | | Museum Sector | | | | |
|------|-----------|---------|-----------|------------|--------|---------------|--------|-------|------------|--------|
| | Number | | | Percentage | | Number | | | Percentage | |
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female |
| 1966 | 745,595 | 280,444 | 1,026,039 | 72.7 | 27.3 | 131 | 70 | 201 | 65.2 | 34.8 |
| 1971 | 784,969 | 333,866 | 1,118,835 | 70.2 | 29.8 | 172 | 82 | 254 | 67.7 | 32.3 |
| 1976 | 865,098 | 407,235 | 1,272,333 | 68.0 | 32.0 | 213 | 144 | 357 | 59.7 | 40.3 |
| 1981 | 862,134 | 525,087 | 1,387,221 | 62.1 | 37.9 | 576 | 261 | 837 | 68.8 | 31.2 |
| 1986 | 890,334 | 609,087 | 1,499,421 | 59.4 | 40.6 | 555 | 450 | 1005 | 55.2 | 44.8 |
| 1991 | 795,069 | 605,334 | 1,400,403 | 56. | 43.2 | 495 | 441 | 936 | 52.9 | 47.1 |
| 1996 | 890,010 | 740,802 | 1,630,812 | 54.6 | 45.4 | 587 | 718 | 1305 | 45.0 | 55.0 |

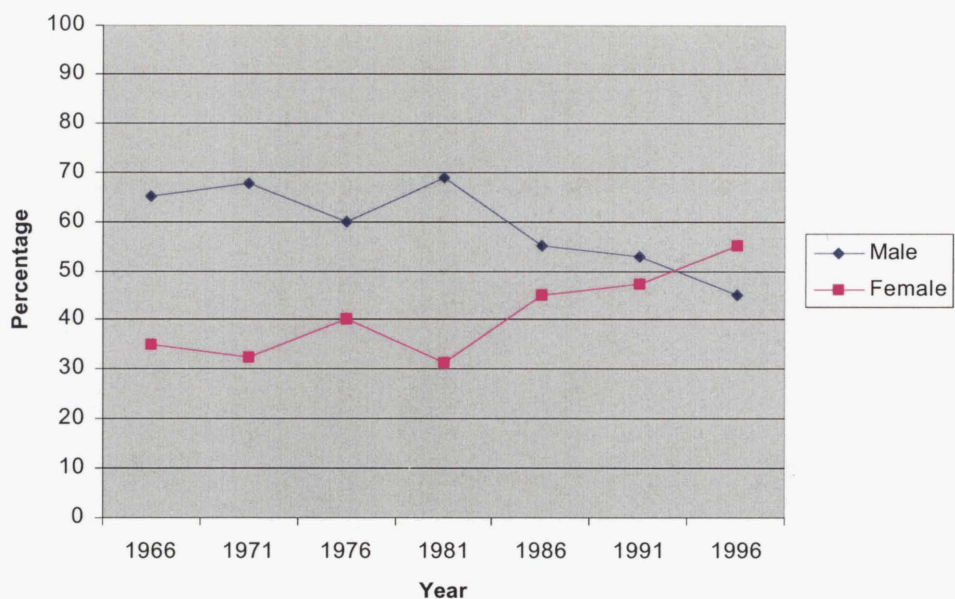
Museum sector employment includes all museum positions including “cultural”, or museum professional positions, such as director, curator, educator, exhibition designer, conservator, and collection manager, as well as non-cultural positions including administration, security, catering, and building services. While shifts in museum employment patterns mirror broader labour market trends we shall see some discernable characteristics in museum employment statistics that are indicative of processes of feminisation.

³⁶ Sources: for 1966 see Department of Statistics (1969) *New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings 1966, Volume 4 Industries and Occupations*; for 1971 see Department of Statistics (1974) *New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings 1971, Volume 4 Industries and Occupations*; for 1976 see Department of Statistics (1980) *New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings 1976: Labour Force, Volume 4*; for 1981 see Department of Statistics (circa 1983) *New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings 1981, Volume 4 Industries and Occupations*, for 1986 see Department of Statistics (1988) *New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings 1986: Labour Force, Series C Report 4*; for 1991 see Department of Statistics (1993) *1991 Census of Population and Dwellings New Zealanders at Work*; for 1996 see Ministry of Cultural Affairs & Statistics New Zealand (1998) *Employment in the Cultural Sector, Nga Mahi ki te Taha Tikanga a-Iwi*.

In Table 1 we can see that a notable change occurred in 1991, when at the height of economic restructuring, the total of number of jobs in both the workforce of Aotearoa New Zealand and the museum sector decreased. Interestingly, in the general workforce men experienced most of the job losses and women experienced proportionally less; this trend is indicative of the market shift from a manufacturing-based to a service-based economy (Ministry of Women's Affairs 1992; Bradley 2000). In contrast, museum sector jobs have bounced back quickly, reflecting what Ellis (2001) describes as the "boom – bust" pattern. In the light of the general economic crisis and monetary retrenchment, museums found that while their funding bodies scrutinised and cut back on their daily expenditure, they supported capital expansion programmes as this initiated "growth." Thus while the general economic conditions were tight, museums moved into an expansion phase as a survival strategy.

Since the 1970s, museums broadened in their number and scope and thus required more staff (Kavanagh 1991: 45; Wittlin 1970). At the same time, women's involvement in museums increased. As noted earlier, one of the conditions for allowing women to enter a previously male dominated occupation is that the demand for labour outstrips supply. Figure 1 below shows the pattern of women's increased participation in museum employment and the change in ratio between men and women employed in museums in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Figure 1: Percentage Distribution Between Males and Females Employed in the Museum Sector in Aotearoa New Zealand, 1966-1996³⁷



In the 30 year-period 1966-1996, we can see a steady decline in the predominance of men employed in the museum sector. Significantly, for an occupation and/or sector to show signs of feminisation, both the ratio and numbers of women employed in an occupation and/or sector needs to be increasing at a higher rate than the total number of new jobs created (Reskin & Roos 1990). In Table 2 below we can see that between 1976 and 1981, a period of rapid sector growth, the number of positions in the museum sector doubled and men obtained three quarters of the new jobs. As noted earlier, when women gain entry into an occupation it is often indicative that some form of organisational change has occurred to allow this shift. The years 1986 and 1991 can be viewed as “transition” years whereby museums were undergoing structural adjustment, which in turn was having an effect on the employment patterns of men and women. For example, in 1986, the early years of the radical economic restructuring programme, the number of new jobs was minimal and the number of men employed in the sector declined but the number of women rose. Then in 1991, at the height of the economic reforms, the number of jobs in the museum sector declined, affecting both men and women. However, between 1981 and 1986 the pattern of increase in the number and ratio of women employed in the museum sector was firmly established and by 1996, for the first time, the museum sector in Aotearoa

³⁷ Sources same as Table 1. See footnote 36.

New Zealand employed more women than men and women obtained 75% of the new jobs. It appears through the figures in Table 2 that an unstable economic period has assisted the process of feminisation in the museum sector.

*Table 2: Job Growth in the Museum Sector in Aotearoa New Zealand
According to Gender, 1976-1996³⁸*

| Sector | 1976 | 1981 | 1986 | 1991 | 1996 |
|-------------|------|-------|-----------|-----------|------|
| Male | 213 | 576 | 555 | 495 | 587 |
| Female | 144 | 261 | 450 | 441 | 718 |
| Total | 357 | 837 | 1005 | 936 | 1305 |
| New Jobs | | 480 | 168 | -69 | 369 |
| New Jobs M% | | 75.6% | declining | declining | 25% |
| New Jobs F% | | 24.4% | 100% | declining | 75% |

Museum theorists van Mensch and Wittlin note that in efforts to democratise museums, such as improving access and targeting diverse and under-represented audiences, the role and importance of visitor-oriented museum services like education and public programmes have increased (van Mensch 1989: 13; Wittlin 1970: 187). These changes directly affect the gender balance of the profession as Taylor (1994: 12) argues that museum education, like the education sector in general, is a woman-dominated field. However there is little data on the gender and/or racial distribution in specific museum positions.

3.5 More Women Entering the Museum Profession

So far I have discussed overall employment in the museum sector. As my focus is on “cultural-based”, or museum professional positions, I need to illustrate the pattern of increase in both the number and ratio of women in museum professional positions. Following the *Standards Classification of Occupations* (Statistics New Zealand 1975, 1992 and 1995), which ostensibly only classifies “curator,” this usefully creates a distinction between positions in the museum sector that are classified “cultural-

³⁸ Sources same as Table 1. See footnote 36.

based,” or “museum professional,” and “non-cultural.” However, this classification of “curator” is blurred and includes actual curators but also “clumps” together other cultural-based museum professional positions such as directors, conservators, museum educators, public programmers, and collection managers. Unfortunately, it excludes exhibition designers. But overall, given that my focus is on all museum professional positions, this “clumping” works in my favour and in Table 3 and Figure 2 below I draw from Statistics New Zealand census figures according to their occupational category “curators,” but use these figures to inform my discussion of the broader category of “museum professional.”

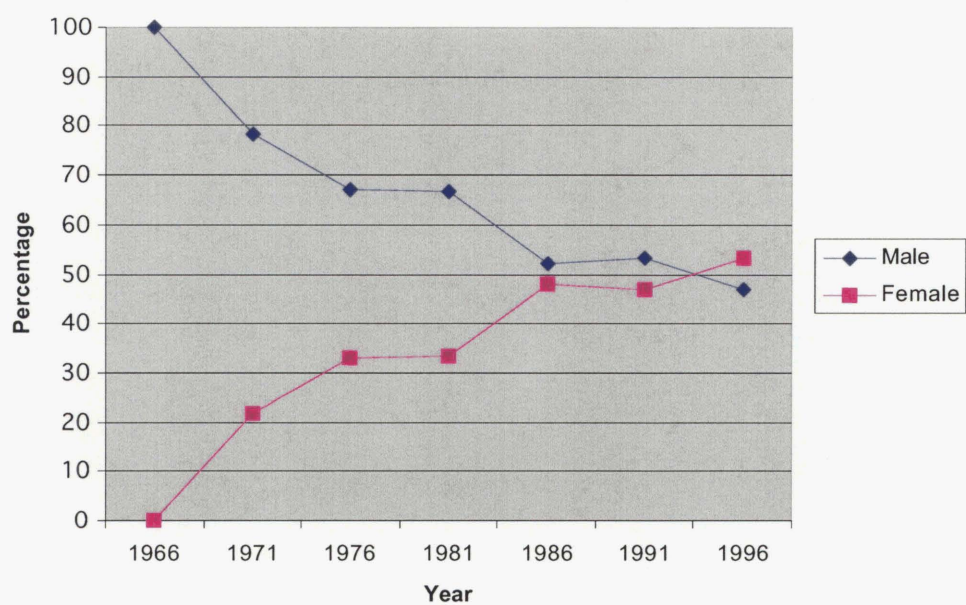
Both Table 3 and Figure 2 show the dramatic growth in the number of museum professional positions overall as well as the level of women’s placement in these positions. In Table 3 we see that in 1966 there were 31 museum professional positions, all of which were held by men. However, in 1996 women held 223, over half, of the museum professional positions. Within 30 years we can see a dramatic shift in ratio between men and women employed in the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand occurring; this is best seen in Figure 2. In 1981 men held only two-thirds of museum professional positions and by 1986 the ratio between men and women was close to 1:1. In 1996, for the first time women held just over 50 percent of museum professional positions.

Table 3: Employment of Museum Professionals in Aotearoa New Zealand According to Gender, 1966-1996³⁹

| Year | Number | | | Percentage | |
|------|--------|--------|-------|------------|--------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female |
| 1966 | 31 | 0 | 31 | 100.0 | 0.0 |
| 1971 | 36 | 10 | 46 | 78.3 | 21.7 |
| 1976 | 53 | 26 | 79 | 67.1 | 32.9 |
| 1981 | 60 | 30 | 90 | 66.7 | 33.3 |
| 1986 | 117 | 108 | 225 | 52.0 | 48.0 |
| 1991 | 159 | 141 | 300 | 53.0 | 47.0 |
| 1996 | 197 | 223 | 420 | 46.9 | 53.1 |

³⁹ Sources same as Table 1. See footnote 36.

Figure 2: *Percentage Distribution Between and Females Employed in Museum Professional Positions in the Museum Sector in Aotearoa New Zealand, 1966-1996*⁴⁰



Feminisation theorists such as Reskin & Roos in the US (1990) and Cathy Wylie in Aotearoa New Zealand (2000) argue that one of the indicators of feminisation is when a sector and/or occupation shows an inordinate increase in the number and ratio of women employed within a given period. Because feminisation is considered a process, Wylie (2000), in her study of the feminisation of the teaching profession in OECD countries during the period 1980-1995, including Aotearoa New Zealand, indicates three levels of feminisation. In Wylie’s model, a low level of feminisation means that women comprise less than 50 per cent of the occupational group, a medium level of feminisation means that women comprise between 50 – 69 percent, and a high level is over 70 percent (Wylie 2000: 7). Wylie’s method is useful for capturing periods of dramatic growth in the proportion and numbers of women within an occupation and/or sector. Utilising Wylie’s model we can see that in 30 years a clearly male dominated museum profession in Aotearoa New Zealand had transformed into a medium level of feminisation. It is important to note that so far my discussion on feminisation has been clearly numerically based; other qualitative factors, which include the “feminisation of work”, will also need to be explored.

⁴⁰ Sources same as Table 1. See footnote 36.

3.6 Looking at Women's Rise in the Museum Sector Through Rose-Tinted Glasses

The inordinate growth of women's employment in the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand has presented new opportunities for women. Currently in Aotearoa New Zealand a number of women hold positions of power in the museum world. Dame Cheryl Sotheran was until recently the Chief Executive Officer of Te Papa, Priscilla Pitt is Director of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery and the Otago Settlers Museum, and Paula Savage directs the City Gallery Wellington Te Whare Toi. In the regions, Helen Telford directs The Suter Te Aratoi O Whakatu in Nelson, Julie Catchpole directs Te Manawa: Science Centre, Gallery, and Museum in Palmerston North, and Sharon Dell directs the Whanganui Regional Museum. These women play an important role in shaping prospective women's career paths in the museum profession. On the surface, women appear to be reaching positions of power within the museum sector and there are apparently continuing prospects for advancement. Yet a survey conducted by Jennifer Evans⁴¹ (1992: 21) on women employed in the museum profession in Aotearoa New Zealand indicated that women comprised 47 percent of the sector but held only seven percent of director or deputy director positions, a finding which shows that women are still vastly under-represented in top museum positions. Further, only one Maori woman, Mina McKenzie, has ever reached a director position in a museum in Aotearoa New Zealand. As Nesbitt notes (1997: 161), more women may be entering an occupational group or sector but this does not necessarily mean that the traditional male-centred balance of power has altered nor does it mean that gender segregation in the workplace has dissolved.

In general terms, women typically hold positions other than that of director, such as middle management, in addition to junior and senior positions in the areas of collection management, conservation, curatorial research, exhibition design, visitor research, education, and public programmes. This variety on the one hand suggests openness to museums employing women in a wide spectrum of roles. On the other hand, as evident from Evans' (1992) study, we can speculate on the existence of a

⁴¹ Jennifer Evans conducted a pilot study of women working in the museum profession in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1992. From her survey responses of 125 women, Evans built a profile of women working in museums.

“glass ceiling” limiting women’s advancement in the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. Yet it appears from the research participants’ comments that there is also a strong desire not to be a museum director; this theme will be explored again in Chapter Seven. While Reskin & Roos (1990) queuing theory is useful for numerically accounting for women’s entry into a sector, we have yet to understand the processes that have allowed this shift to occur, as well the specifics about the kinds of positions women generally occupy within a profession. In the section that follows I explore the significance of the increase in numbers and ratio of women employed in the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand in relation to the growing importance of service work and its links, if any, to feminisation.

3.7 *Feminising Museum Work*

I noted in Chapter One that within the framework of economic rationalism all public organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand, including museums, have become more commercial in both policy and practice. Museums, like other public sector organisations, were required to actively generate revenue. As a result the museum shifted their *raison d’être* from collecting, researching, and preserving cultural and natural heritage to “the museum experience.” In the process, museums adopted internal organisational structures that facilitated their ability to sell their “products” to the museum “customer.” In other words, economic restructuring and the subsequent organisational change required have led to a repositioning of museums from a research-based organisation into a market-driven customer-centred destination. In this section I focus on the relationship between the increase in the numbers and ratio of women employed in the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand and the increased emphasis on “customer service” in museums.

At this point it is important to mention that economic restructuring was not the only influence in this repositioning towards a customer service orientation. As noted in Chapter Two, a strand of change has already been occurring on an international scale within the museum sector since the 1970s, termed the democratisation of museums. In combination, democratisation and economic restructuring have contributed to a

directional shift of the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand, placing an emphasis on more visible “front-of-house” public services over other activities. This has instilled change in both the organisational structure of the museum and the museum profession.

Under the new management model the museum is viewed as a “service provider” and the museum’s public as a “customer,” or “consumer” of these services (McLean 1997: 120).⁴² Interestingly, the phenomenal growth of the tourist and leisure industry has produced some challenges for museums. In the words of British cultural theorist John Urry (2002: 120), “theme parks, shopping malls and heritage centres have all forced museums to compete”. The quality of customer service is an important factor in capturing and maintaining a share of the market for museums and other tourist and leisure industries (see also Ames 1992: 12; Moore 1997: 22). In this section I draw from Adkins’ analysis of service work in the leisure and tourist industry in Britain and discuss two factors that overlap with changes in the museum profession in Aotearoa New Zealand since the introduction of the new management model and the museum’s subsequent move to the “museum experience.” The first factor concerns what the shift to customer service means within the context of the museum. Second I look at how the customer service role can be interpreted as a “performance of femininity” for both men and women (Adkins 2001: 1). These two factors, amongst others, contribute to the feminisation of museum work.

First, service work in the tourist and leisure industry, and arguably museums, involves mediation between the service provider and the customer. Adkins (1995: 7) argues that the “quality of the social interaction between the service provider and the consumer becomes part of the product” and the “cultural expectations of consumers” regarding how service is delivered shapes “employment relations within the industry.” Service work requires staff to not only provide for the customer’s needs through emotional, nurturing and care-taking roles, but also the service worker’s performance

⁴² Significantly, emphasis is placed on providing quality services from the view of the customer, not the museum or its staff. For further discussion on how to assess “service quality” from the museum user’s viewpoint see Fiona McLean (1997: 120-123) *Marketing the Museum*.

– which includes their gender, age, race, dress, and behaviour – are part of what is sold (Adkins 1995: 8).

Adkins (1995: 9) notes that service work in the tourist and leisure industry in Britain, like other late capitalist nations, is predominantly seasonal, part-time and often low-paid and low skilled. Significant differences arise between my study of museum work in Aotearoa New Zealand and Adkins' in so far as my focus is on full-time museum professionals, where the majority hold tertiary qualifications and often move into managerial roles. In this context, museum professionals are not low skilled, part-time or seasonal employees. One area of museum work not included in my analysis but which best suits Adkins' model are those employed as "hosts," guides, receptionists, security, demonstrators, and café and shop staff (Donnelly 1996: 13). These positions are usually part-time and casual. However, a close following of Adkins' analysis of service work as gendered work can be upheld primarily in the way that the feminine emotional, care-taking and nurturing roles have filtered into all areas of the museum sector whereby all staff, including professional and managerial roles, must centre their activities on the museum experience.

The customer service work model has created a radical shift for the museum profession. Beyond the information kiosks and museum shop, various specialist museum staff work in teams to produce exhibitions with broad appeal (Macdonald 1998: 120). The ability to produce exhibitions that are fun, factual and friendly is crucial. In some instances, a lack of expert knowledge in the exhibition subject area is considered a useful starting point from which to create an exhibition that promotes "public understanding" and provides customer service (Macdonald 1998: 120-121). As a result, the nature of a museum worker has been redefined from that of an "expert" to someone who serves as a "cultural facilitator" or "interpreter", a role seen to enable the public to have better access to the museum's resources and services (Macdonald 1998: 120). In the process, exhibition techniques have moved from the "mini PhD dissertation pasted on walls" (van Mensch 1989: 26) to a complex and multi-layered approach that offers the museum visitor variety in the level and mode of information offered (Macdonald 1997: 166). Examples include easy to understand

exhibition labels, exhibition catalogues that provide more detailed information, audio guided-tours to “guide” the visitor through the exhibition, the use of computers to provide an opportunity for visitor interaction and self-guided learning, public lectures given by subject specialists, and guided tours conducted by educators or volunteers. Although many of the services and products listed above have always been offered by museums, under the new management model differences in the museum professional’s ability to transform specialised museological expertise into an ability to work with the public is valued. Furthermore, staff performance and appearances are also considered part of the service product, which leads to the second point.

Feminine performances, such as nurturing and care-taking roles, and feminine aesthetics, such as dress and behaviour, are central to customer service and thus viewed by management as a workplace resource that can be monitored and assessed (Adkins 2001). Such moves are linked to the cultural shift in service sector organisations such as museums. Under the ethos of the new management model, the museum is constructed as a market-driven customer-centred destination, and museum professionals – both men and women – are required to perform the feminine role of customer service.

Whilst there appears to be some overlap between the growth of service sector jobs, the growth in women’s employment, and feminisation, in that service sector jobs are female-dominated and require employees to carry out “feminine roles”, Adkins (2001:2) argues that such gendering of jobs “is by no means fixed but rather is continuously made, remade and contested” and therefore accounts of feminisation can be reinforced only in so far as the skills required of customer service jobs are viewed as a “performance of femininity” rather than gender *per se* (1).

Importantly, even though the customer service role is rendered “feminine”, and men working in these sectors are also required to fulfil the role of customer service, the performances between men and women differ. Not only are there differences between men and women’s ability to move within the customer service model but also, as will

be elaborated in Chapter Seven, the research participants noted a link between their gender and a perceived lack of professional credibility. Similarly, while the feminisation of *work* may have affected both men and women and brought more women into the museum profession, this process has not necessarily translated to a feminisation of *power* within the museum.

While the museum sector has grown in the period 1966 – 1996 and in this period the proportion of women increased, there is little evidence of “male flight” (Reskin & Roos 1990). Bradley argues that feminisation does not seem to have adversely affected men at the top end of the market or in top positions in feminising sectors (1999). Bradley (1999) believes that qualified middle-class women are moving into semi-professional and professional positions in growing sectors that might once have been reserved for working-class men. Thus while men still remain in top positions in sectors such as museums the change is occurring at the entry-level to middle management positions where restructuring has created new types of jobs requiring new sets of skills – these jobs focus on instigating institutional change through teamwork, the provision of customer service and a flexible work force.

The next task in this discussion about processes of feminisation involves an inquiry into how museum work is valued by museum professionals, or in the words of Reskin & Roos, how museum work stacks up in the “job queue” (p.29). In doing so I consider ways in which museum work might have devalued through a decline in the terms and conditions of work roles. Drawing from a variety of media sources, I explore subjective and qualitative experiences of feminisation. The qualities that I will assessing include a decline in work conditions, such as increased workloads requiring longer work hours for a low level of pay, as well as a decline in the value of the work itself (Reskin & Roos 1990).

The section that follows serves as a prelude to the methodology chapter and the data chapters that follow. We shall see in the data chapters that museum work has been traditionally been organised into two general categories, front-of-house activities that

focus on the museum visitor, and back-of-house activities, which focus on the museum objects. Positions that cater for the front-of-house have grown; this includes departments such as public programmes, marketing, education and exhibition design. In contrast, positions that cater for back-of-house activities such as collection management, conservation and in particular curatorial work, have faced some dramatic changes, as they have had to reorganise their work in terms of the “customer service” ethos. The restructuring of museums and the adoption of new management practices that favours teamwork, customer service and flexibility suits front-of-house activities rather than the back-of-house. It is important to keep this trend in mind when reading the next section in addition to noting that museums have been and continue to be in a state of change as they absorb the rhetoric of new managerialism.

3.8 *The Devaluation of Museum Work*

In recently feminised occupations and/or sectors such as clerical work, retail, catering, the health and education professions (Bradley 2000: 75), and the legal profession (Chiu & Leicht 1999), workers are reportedly experiencing high levels of stress and with this stress-related illness (Bradley 1999: 217), as well as increased levels of workplace dissatisfaction (Chiu & Leicht 1999). It appears that these experiences are deeply embedded within organisational restructuring. However, in the Preface I drew from a fictional character called Lesje and posed the question of whether the passionate, skilled and committed curator would survive radical organisational transformation. As she continued to focus on her specialised work tasks I wondered how she would survive; would she resist or absorb the management rhetoric or would she make some form of chameleon style adaptation to her new work environment? I dwell on this matter as certain “exploitative” labour conditions such as long hours and low pay are not new to the museum world and therefore cannot be solely attributed to feminisation. In the section that follows I touch on the idea that the appeal of museum work has up until recently not been wholly reliant of work conditions but rather lay on a subjective assessment of the intrinsic value of museum work. Museum workers often turned a “blind eye” to low pay and long hours as there appeared to be a satisfactory match between the purpose of museums and the museum professionals’ commitment to their work. Since the introduction of the economic reforms the “match” has been less evident. There appears to be a connection between

macroeconomic reforms whereby organisations have retrenched and refocused their business goals requiring not only new sets of labour skills but also creating a new type of work environment. This new work environment I will argue throughout the thesis has led to the devaluation of museum work. Devaluation is based on factors such as lessened job security, a competitive work culture and a reduction in the level of work satisfaction. However first I need to establish the matter of pay.

Historically museum work has been valued on altruistic ideals, indeed to the point where people have been willing to accept lower pay for the work (Weil 1990: 77; DiMaggio 1988: 29; Davis-Packard & Marks, 8 January 2001). This view is most salient in literature about art museums in the US, where primarily middle-class educated elites undertake museum work⁴³ (Ames 1992; DiMaggio 1988: 28; Cameron 1971: 16-17). In Aotearoa New Zealand, a collective cultural myth of “classlessness” (Wilkes 1994: 67-68) obscures the marked social distinctions used by Ames (1992), DiMaggio (1988) and Cameron (1971) to describe the social milieu of those who work in museums. Instead the term “life style choice” is often attached to museum work (www.careers.co.nz, 22 July 2002). In the words of curator Claire Regnault, who describes her work on a career-based website:

Officially it's 8:30 – 5:00, but most people in the industry do more than that. It is a lifestyle type of job; in order to be successful you can't think you'll just turn up to work and go home and not have to think about it any other time (www.careers.co.nz, 22 July 2002).

Underlying Regnault's words is the notion of how the museum professionals' passion, loyalty and enthusiasm for their work over-ride these less favourable labour conditions, such as long hours. In order to be “successful”, the long hours are required, and because of their commitment to their profession the long hours can be sustained.

⁴³ Although a class analysis of museum staff in Aotearoa New Zealand is not available, a study conducted by Connal McCarthy (1986), drawing from Bourdieu's theory of cultural habitus, supports the correlation that students from the middle-upper classes take art history. And in the words of one of the research participants, art history was “considered an appropriate subject for middle class girls.”

Until recently public portrayals of dissatisfaction about conditions of employment in museums were relatively scarce; in comparison industrial action carried out by health and education professionals occurred more frequently. In the examples that follow I will show that in recent years the “exploitative” employment conditions in the museum sector both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally have become less acceptable by museum professionals. In the process, factors such as long hours and low pay are considered indicative of a decline in work conditions and could well point to evidence that the museum work is losing value.

3.8.1 Case One: The Question of Job Security

In the year 2000, as the Director and Board of Trustees announced plans for expansion and organisational restructuring, unionised staff of the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York went on strike. Those involved in the strike were white-collar professional employees, such as curators, educators and librarians. The majority, 70 percent, were women, and predominantly “young, recent college graduates [...] headed for professional careers in the arts” (Davis-Packard & Marks, 8 January 2001).

MoMA staff believed they were underpaid for their qualifications; they worked long hours and felt exploited. They wanted to maintain their benefits, which included health insurance and pension plans (Robbins, 8 January 2001). In the words of a MoMA striker, a museum photographer since 1977:

Most of us accept lower salaries to do this work. I love the place. I love being part of something bigger than me, of putting on a show of beauty that people enjoy (Robbins, 8 January 2001).

It appears that the low level of pay could continue to be tolerated by the museum photographer: “it's not the money. The sacred cow is health coverage” (Robbins, 8

January 2001). A lack of a public health system in the US combined with high costs of health insurance makes health coverage an essential part of employment terms and conditions particularly if your income is low. MoMA staff were also concerned that the proposed expansion project and organisational restructuring programme would lead to job losses, and combined with the proposed reduction of employee benefits, they felt they were “being asked to sacrifice their livelihoods to help pay for the cost of the museum expansion” (Whyte, 8 January 2001), thus adding to a sense of insecurity. British writer Harriet Bradley (1999: 217) comments that factors such as reductions in staff and operating budgets and increased job insecurity – increasingly common under the new management model – can contribute to a decline in work conditions. In this instance, through strike action MoMA staff successfully protected their employment conditions. Another point of resistance undertaken by a museum professional in Aotearoa New Zealand, more risky and unfortunately in this particular instance less successful, involves court action.

3.8.2 Case Two: The Question of a Decline in the Work Culture

On the front page of the Sunday Star Times are photographs of two women. Both are dressed in black, with minimal adornment. The woman on the left looks down; her eyes are hidden behind dark sunglasses, her hair dishevelled. In contrast, the woman on the right does not hide her eyes; her hair is immaculate. The woman on the left is Gillian Lloyd, described in the news article as Aotearoa New Zealand’s top art curator; she is taking a half-million dollar employment suit against Te Papa. The woman on the right is Dame Cheryl Sotheran, the Chief Executive Officer of Te Papa; she is defending against Lloyd’s claim.

The newspaper article systematically outlines Lloyd’s case; she claims that she was “forced” to resign from Te Papa, citing excessive workloads and stress-related health problems. Sotheran counterclaims that Lloyd had only made complaints to management about her pay rather than her concerns about excessive workloads and stress-related illness. For Lloyd, the crux of her dissatisfaction with working at Te Papa came from an exhibition project with unachievable budget and time constraints; she felt that she was “set up to fail” (Laugesen 2001). In counterargument, Sotheran

stated that teams rather than individuals create exhibitions at Te Papa. Thus, Lloyd's personal concerns about unrealistic time and budget constraints on the exhibition were unfounded; the exhibition was not Lloyd's sole responsibility but rather the exhibition team's as a whole.

In her defence, Sotheran added that Lloyd was a respected staff member and Te Papa management would re-employ Lloyd if she wished. Lloyd is 39 years of age, has postgraduate qualifications and over 10 years work experience in the museum sector. Yet, Lloyd felt strongly that she could not return to Te Papa.

Whilst Lloyd stated that she clearly supported the museological ideals that Te Papa was instigating, she felt that overall, Te Papa's work culture was not a "safe work environment." Staff lacked professional development opportunities, there was little support from senior management, and there was also a lack of respect towards employees as individuals. According to Lloyd, the overall work culture of Te Papa was difficult and "dysfunctional." Lloyd believed that Sotheran as CEO had instilled a culture of fear in her staff and this culture of fear trickled through the layers of the museum hierarchy. There was also a lack of sense of what was considered "acceptable work behaviour," with the CEO herself demonstrating a lack of decorum.

According to Sotheran, Te Papa was a "cut and thrust" and "spirited" organisation rather than "dysfunctional" as Lloyd had described. Sotheran's primary concern was with "quality of performance" and "issues of concept or programme delivery," rather than "focusing my displeasure on individuals." Sotheran believed that Lloyd, like some other curators, simply "had difficulty working within the new culture of the museum" (Laugesen 2001).

Lloyd's case is complex. She claims that the new "cut and thrust" work culture of Te Papa requires a flexible and subservient staff, who operate under a culture of fear,

within limited, sometimes unrealistic, budget and time constraints, and with little infrastructural support from senior management. In contrast, Sotheran believes that Lloyd and other curators have not adapted to sharing their status as “knowledge workers” in the new museum. Both views have credence. Both Lloyd and Sotheran agree that the status of curators has altered, but their reasons differ. To Sotheran the curator’s status have not lessened to any extent, but rather other positions in the museum, such as marketing and public programmes, have been elevated to similar importance. In contrast, Lloyd believes that the status of curatorial positions such as hers have diminished radically. She noted little institutional recognition of her expertise and inappropriate allocation of resources to undertake her work tasks, which, in turn, undermined her professional credibility. Further, due to an overall decline in work conditions, such as tight time constraints and increased work pressures requiring longer work hours, she was suffering personally from stress-related health problems.

Lloyd’s case is extraordinary in terms of not only speaking out against the work culture of a high-profile organisation but also by arguing that under the new management model the generic skills of flexibility and teamwork were considered more valuable than the specialised knowledge of her field of expertise. With increased emphasis on customer service, curatorial services are rendered less valuable than previously and Lloyd views this as indicative of a decline in her professional status. As a “senior curator” Lloyd was paid \$42,000 per annum and claimed to work long hours (Laugesen 2001). As noted earlier, previously, working long hours for low pay was overlooked by museum workers in favour of institutional loyalty and their passion for their work. Since the introduction of the new management model, however, museum professionals like Lloyd gradually view working long hours for low pay as a decline in work conditions and, in turn, institutional loyalty has also eroded. Lloyd is not alone in her assessment.

3.8.3 Case Three: The Question of a Decline in Work Satisfaction

In 1999 the Otago Museum in Dunedin was undergoing extensive change. This involved not only the refurbishment of the museum building and the upgrade of

exhibition spaces but also subsequent reorganisation of staff roles. In the process, the Otago Museum experienced an “inordinate number of staff resignations” (Gibb 1999) which drew the attention of the Public Services Association (PSA), the labour union for public sector employees in Aotearoa New Zealand. The PSA suggested that “poor staff morale” and “work related stress” were contributing factors to the high level of resignations (Gibb 1999).

The Director of the Otago Museum, Shimrath Paul, acknowledged that the “demands of the museum redevelopment project were contributing to the busy workload” for museum staff. His view was that, like most organisations undergoing change, staff resignations were common (Gibb 1999). Paul further argued that high levels of staff resignations were not extraordinary and more likely to be a coincidence rather than a direct result of low staff morale.

However, drawing from the research participants’ conversations, it is clear that obtaining museum work in Aotearoa New Zealand can be difficult; the sector is both small and turnover of positions is usually low. Museum professionals usually resign only when they have secured employment elsewhere and there is no clear indication that this was the case for the Otago Museum workers. Further, due to the high level of passion and commitment museum professionals have towards their work, it requires exceptional circumstances, as in the case of the Otago Museum, for staff to tender their resignation, as will be elaborated further in Chapter Six.

Paul would like us to believe that a high number of staff resignations during a period of organisational restructuring was normal. Sotheran would like us to believe that Lloyd and certain other individual museum professionals were having problems adapting to the “cut and thrust” spirit of Te Papa. The striking MoMA workers would like us to believe that they were passionate about their museum work but needed to maintain a certain standard of living. I would like you to believe that these cases provide noteworthy examples of the impact that radical organisational transformation

can have on staff, which in their aggregate reflect various processes of feminisation. Such factors include increased workloads and hours which have contributed to stress-related illness, a decline in employment terms and conditions which has led to staff feeling frustrated and undervalued by senior management, and an increase in workplace dissatisfaction.

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have used the idea of feminisation to describe three trends: the increase in the number and ratio of women employed in the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand, the increased importance of customer service, and the devaluation of museum work. Drawing from Statistics New Zealand Census figures, we saw that in a period of thirty years, 1966-1996, the long-held numerical male dominance of the museum sector was dramatically eroded. In this same period, stemming from moves to make museums more popular and accessible, the role of customer service has also increased. The increase in the number and ratio of women employed in museums can be related partly to the increase in customer service roles, in so far as the customer service role is rendered as a “feminine performance” (Adkins 2001); however a misconception arises from the fact that women’s increased entry into a sector is seen to contribute to its devaluation (see Nesbitt 1997; Reskin & Roos 1990).

The devaluation of museum work, I argued, stems from the radical transformation of the museum’s work culture. I noted that museum professionals have always worked long hours for low pay, factors often used to show evidence of feminisation (Reskin & Roos 1990). However, under the regime of the new management model, working long hours for low pay has become unacceptable and is viewed as a decline in work conditions, as shown in Lloyd’s employment tribunal case against Te Papa and the high number of staff resignations at the Otago Museum. Key practices of the new management model, such as the increased importance of customer service, suggests not only a shift in work culture more inclusive of women but at the same time a diminishment of the expert role of the museum professional. In other words, the

feminine attributes of this customer-oriented work culture contribute to a subsequent devaluation in the profession rather than women's entry into the profession alone.

As evident in the MoMA example, the strikers were not only fighting to improve their work conditions and benefits, they were also setting out to "change the way their industry operates and perceives" museum professionals *per se* (Anonymous, 8 January 2001). The "MoMA problem," according to one staff member, was the mismatch between the "ideal" of exhibiting and educating and the economic "reality" requiring museums to be more business-like or corporate (Anonymous, 8 January 2001). Unfortunately in some circumstances, as in the case of Lloyd, the "museum problem" has been construed as a problem pertaining to certain museum staff. These staff tend to be located within the lower to middle strata of the museum hierarchy, and in some instances staff whose work is centred on back-of-house activities.

In my initial investigation into assessing the impact of economic restructuring on the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand I looked to museum literature that could account for shifts in museum professionals' assessment of the value of their work during a period of radical organisational change. With the exception of Elaine Heumann Gurian (1995) I found this topic was either in its infancy or had been marginalised. I also wanted to assess the connection, if any, from the increase in the numbers and ratio of women employed in the museum sector to the devaluation of museum work. I needed a research method that could account for macro-level changes, such as economic restructuring and organisational change, but also valued the individual museum professionals who were experiencing the radical changes to their workplace, particularly women. This led to the development of a framework that could help me assess the relationship between radical organisational transformation and feminisation. In the chapter that follows I outline the research methods employed in the shaping, researching and writing of this thesis.

Chapter Four:

Interpreting Experiences About Feminisation

4.1 Introduction

Three research strategies have been employed in this thesis. The first, comprising chapters one, two and three, are literature reviews and analysis of economic restructuring, museology and feminisation, particularly as they pertain to the museum profession in Aotearoa New Zealand. These three chapters provide the context of the study. Second, because one of the factors of feminisation involves an inordinate rise in the number and ratio of women employed in a sector and/or profession I utilised available population census and museum sector statistics in order to numerically quantify such growth in the museum sector. This quantitative assessment was addressed in Chapter Three, and combining statistical evidence with a literature review has been useful for identifying the relationship between economic restructuring and feminisation. Yet, to understand the nuances, character and extent of feminisation of the museum sector requires some exploration into how museum workers themselves have experienced economic restructuring and the consequent changes implemented within the sector. While the media sources that I drew from at the end of Chapter Three provided a rudimentary source of qualitative evidence of feminisation, more evidence is required thus a third research strategy was employed which involved fieldwork. The purpose of this chapter is to outline my research method; this includes the theoretical approach to conducting fieldwork and the methods I employed both for gathering and interpreting the data.

4.2 Qualitative Research

In broad terms, qualitative research is concerned with how people interpret their experience and how they use those interpretations to guide the way they live. In other words, qualitative research seeks to understand the meanings people construct about their experiences in the social world (Plummer 1995). I chose to use *feminist* qualitative research to highlight the experiences of women in particular. Feminist qualitative research provides the space in which women and other marginalised or silenced groups of people can tell their stories about their lives and be heard (Fonow

& Cook 1991; Harding 1987). Feminist research is a political practice whereby gender is examined with factors such as race/ ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, and other aspects of people's lives (Hill Collins 1991). A feminist perspective is not exclusive to women, but embraces research methods whereby the alternative frameworks for understanding the social world are sought alongside existing dominant discourses that privilege some at the expense of many.

At the outset of my fieldwork phase I was aware that museums had undergone radical change. Museum literature in general focused on management techniques that would assist with incorporating these changes (McKinlay Douglas 1995) rather than assessing the impact of change on individual professionals. As I suggested at the end of Chapter Three, there was one exception, *Institutional Trauma: Major Change in Museums and Its Effect on Staff* (1995), compiled by Elaine Heumann Gurian. Focusing primarily on museums in America, the book identifies certain emblematic changes that can directly impact upon the museum staff collectively and individually. Examples include shifting to a new building or renovating the current building, organisational restructuring and change of directorship or governance. Heumann Gurian states that the effect of significant change on staff continues for a long time (1995: 18). Change affects individuals and groups and *Institutional Trauma* focuses on how administrators and managers can reduce collective staff stress and implement institutional coping mechanisms (Heumann Gurian 1995: 19). Heumann Gurian claims, "unremitting and untreated stress within an organization will produce a collective response within 18 months" (1995: 19). Examples include staff grievances, increases in non-work participation such as illness or work slowdown due to depression and excessive staff turnover (1995: 19). Although not the focus of the book, Heumann Gurian (1995: 19) acknowledges that individuals may experience symptoms of "[...] low job satisfaction, low motivation at work, intention to leave one's job and absenteeism from work."

My research acknowledges the effects of infrastructural change on members of a professional group. Institutional change, although stimulating and challenging, can be

a difficult experience. My intention was to contextualise womens experiences of the impact of radical organisational transformation within current museological debate.

I chose a qualitative research approach as a means to complement the macro analysis of the previous chapters. Interview data based on the experiences of 17 mid-career women provides the main source of qualitative evidence as a means to conceptualise, describe and assess the effects of economic restructuring, radical organisational transformation, and the movement towards feminisation on the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. Specific emphasis is placed on how women in these organisations interpret the value and status of their work and if feminisation theory can fully account for these experiences and interpretations.

4.3 Interpreting Experience

My epistemological concerns focused on the issue of how to interpret the research participants' interpretation of their experiences. Kvale (1996: 166) argues that the process of constructing research data "distorts" the lived experience of the research participant as the interview conversation is transferred first into an interview transcript, then into excerpts and quotations and later buffeted by the authors own narrative. Similarly feminist sociologists Rosemary Du Plessis and Nicola Armstrong point out how the researcher interprets the research participant's narratives through their own "meaning-making gaze" (Du Plessis & Armstrong 1998: 109). Thus the role of the researcher is to "make visible" the theories and ideas that shaped the research process including how the data narratives were constructed (Grace 1998: 115).

The narratives arising from qualitative interview conversations offer a form of personal biography. These narratives can be used as a research method for examining the impact of structural and institutional change on individuals (Walby 1997: 9-11). Yet, in the process of telling stories about their lives (Plummer 1995: 5-12), the research participant enacts a kind of performance (Salazar 1991: 93-106) where they

“rework, rethink and reinterpret their experiences” (Du Plessis & Armstrong 1998: 107). For example, during the interview conversations the research participants frequently shifted their subject positions when discussing the impact of structural change on the museum and their work. These shifts come about not because the research participants were innately inconsistent but rather because there are always conflicting and contradictory discourses as people move between different subject positions and the locus of power that these subject positions hold (Kondo 1990). Thus, factors like age, class, race and qualifications are important for assessing how processes of economic restructuring have altered museum professionals in unequal ways. Collectively these personal work narratives offer insight into the current social, cultural, political and economic climate (Walby 1997: 22) and help make sense of the ways in which a male dominated sector has become feminised.

I commenced research based on a Feminist Standpoint principle that women, in general, are the marginalised “other” (Fonow & Cook 1991; Harding 1987; Harding 1993; Hill Collins 1991; hooks 1984, 1989). In this view, race, gender and class stratify society. The values of the dominant culture set parameters on how we act and come to know about ourselves. Thus the most appropriate way to learn about inequalities within our social structures is to start with the experiences of those people who are marginalised, those whose experiences are devalued, ignored or invisible. However, I differ from the Feminist Standpoint view that there is a “typical” or “essential” woman’s life experience. The women I interviewed come from a particular location in time, space and place, and their experiences will be informed by these historical circumstances. They are tertiary qualified and hold professional positions and for these reasons alone can be classified as “elite.” Their experiences will contrast sharply with the experiences of women from less privileged locations, class positions and racial groups (bell hooks 1989; Hill Collins 1991). Conversely, there may be similarities between women and men working in museums, which my research will not directly substantiate because of its focus solely on women.

Even so, I wish to present, with provisos, the idea that the narratives provided through interview conversations serves an important function in feminist research. For example, narratives provide an avenue to voice experiences that otherwise may not be represented in mainstream texts. According to Susan Stanford Friedman, “the loss of collective memories, of myriad stories about the past, has contributed greatly to the ongoing subordination of women, including histories of feminism, [and] is a critical component of resistance and change” (1995: 29). From this point of view I locate my research on women’s work experiences within the museum profession in New Zealand as adding to a tradition of collecting women’s narratives and building upon women’s history. Stanford Friedman notes feminism survives partly through its ability to reproduce itself in subsequent research and generations of feminist researchers and theorists. Yet, she cautions that feminist histories are not fixed, truthful accounts (Stanford Friedman 1995: 29) and that knowledge must be open to questioning. I wish to avoid misrepresenting the data by stating that the analysis is a true account of real experiences (Denzin 1997: 74) or confusing meaning with truth (Denzin 1997: 77), and this is where a poststructuralist approach has its strengths.

Poststructuralist theory recognises that instability, fluidity and difference shapes accounts of experience at one and the same time in a way that Feminist Standpoint theory cannot (Haraway 1988; Minh-ha 1992; Kondo 1990; Denzin 1997). In other words, poststructuralist theory views subjects of knowledge – the research participants and the narratives they offer – as multiple, contradictory and contingent, not unitary, homogeneous and coherent as Feminist Standpoint ideals suggest (Haraway 1988: 586). Further, research participants’ narratives are told for a multiplicity of reasons.

Like Feminist Standpoint theory, poststructuralist analysis has also been criticised for a certain type of “blindness” (Stanford Friedman 1995: 12), transferring the research experience into a textual analysis requires blindness to women’s experiences as individuals and their claims of the real. However, poststructuralist analysis is useful for problematising the generalising tendencies that these workplace narratives inadvertently point towards, especially if they are packaged as “the real account”

(Stanford Friedman 1995: 21-22). In this view, I locate the data within a framework that highlights the plurality, fluidity, contingency and contradictions of the women's words and note points of departure as they shift their subject positions. I also hope to depart from the generalised historical narrative of the first three chapters of this thesis. The purpose of these earlier chapters was to provide a context for key themes such as economic restructuring, democratisation and feminisation. In other words, these chapters provided a foundation from which the fieldwork was conducted and later, a platform from which the data interpretation could converse with, against and beside.⁴⁴

The final point I wish to consider concerns ways in which “feminism has become increasingly anxious about itself” (Elam & Wiegman 1995: 2) particularly how “feminism’s most elaborate and contentious conversations seems now to be about its own political and philosophical assumptions, omissions, and oppressive complicities.” Much of my thoughts on the research process and data interpretation lay with similar concerns such as misrepresentation, omissions and unintentional complicity. However my allegiance lay with “interpreting experience,” knowing that experience was contingent and so too was interpretation. This contingency lay on the foundations of a particular historical moment and does not claim or attempt to present truth about the impact of radical organisational change or the truth about the impact of feminisation on museums in Aotearoa New Zealand or the truth about the research participants’ experiences. The outcome is a single text but it does not claim to speak for everybody.

4.4 *Mechanics of the Research Process*

I conducted informal, semi-structured interviews with 17 women working in the museum profession throughout New Zealand. The interviews, which were more like informal conversations, comprised 12 questions (see Appendix A for interview schedule). The duration of the interviews were between 60 to 90 minutes, each

⁴⁴ The expression is taken from the title of *Feminism Beside Itself* (1995) edited by Diane Elam & Rosemary Wiegman.

interview was taped and later transcribed. Excerpts from the transcripts were selected and form the basis of Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

I contacted potential research participants once I had obtained permission from the University of Canterbury Research Ethics Committee. Initially I approached women I knew and asked them to participate in the interviews. Following from this I telephoned women involved in the museum and cultural sector in different regions to provide me with names of women who fitted my research criteria and might be willing to participate. Therefore I interviewed both women I knew and women I had not met before. The first point of contact was by telephone conversation. I introduced my research project and asked if they were willing to participate. The immediacy of the telephone conversation allowed for initial concerns to be raised and discussed. Following from the telephone conversation I sent out an information sheet, which covered the aims of the research, what was expected of the research participants, and outlined the general themes that would be explored in the interviews. The information sheet ensured that confidentiality would be met. Enclosed with the information sheet was a consent form that the research participants signed and returned. Upon receiving the consent form, I telephoned the women and we arranged a time to have an interview. Interviewing took place during February, May and August 1999. I made 19 appointments but two women cancelled their interview appointments.

4.4.1 Selection of the Research Participants

The museum sector in New Zealand employs fewer than 2000 people. Given the small sample I took care to choose women who would represent a cross-section of demographics, museum work and museum types. For example, I chose women from different areas of expertise such as curator, public programmes, education, small museum directors, researcher, technician, conservation, collection management and exhibition design. I attempted to gain a balance between different regions including the North and South Islands, between small to medium sized regional museums and the larger metropolitan museums. I interviewed women from different museum types;

this included the large general collection museums (incorporating natural history, social history, Maori, ethnology and art) and smaller specialist museums with limited or no collections. I also selected women with different demographic characteristics, such as race/ethnicity, length of time working in museums, age, sexual orientation and marital status.

I focused on “mid-career” women. I defined mid-career as someone aged between 28-42 years of age who has worked in museums between five and 12 years. One woman had worked at the museum for only 2 years yet she identified herself as mid-career. I selected her as she was new to the museum sector, yet held a middle management position, and I wanted to see ways in which her perspective about the changes occurring in the museum may have differed from longer-serving museum professionals.

The term “mid-career” captures movement; the career path has been established but not reached maturity. For two research participants although they had been working in museums for five years they still held junior level positions and were actively trying to advance to more senior roles. Preferably they entered museum work soon after completing their relevant tertiary qualifications. Some women reflected this pattern; others had worked as teachers, researchers, librarians, artists, designers, and even in insurance for a short before entering the museum sector.

I chose mid-career for two reasons. First, by working within my age/time criteria these women would have experienced changes implemented by the economic restructuring programme that commenced in 1984 and continued throughout the 1990s. Economic restructuring as noted in Chapter Three is one of the catalysts of feminisation and I wanted to capture the research participants’ perception of ways in which the value of their work had altered. Second, feminisation of the museum sector has also been stimulated by the influx of younger women. With my selection criteria

I hoped to capture women who had contributed to this increase in women's employment in the museum sector.

There were two challenges with maintaining this mid-career distinction. First, it needed to capture sideways movement, for example some women are mid-career by self-identification, experience and age and have moved into other work in the cultural sector or moved back to their original occupation, such as teaching, illustrating a flexible career life path and career trajectory. Second, the relative flatness of the museum organisation structure makes it hard to define what mid-career is. For example, once entering specialist museum work there is limited scope for growth except for management positions. In addition, the sheer dearth of museum jobs means that it is not always easy to move on to more challenging positions in other museums in New Zealand. Options include moving overseas or moving sideways within the museum or to other positions within the cultural sector, such as government bodies like Creative New Zealand, the Historic Places Trust and the Ministry for Culture and Heritage. Other options are university work, freelance or consultant work or moving into the private sector. Having described some of the problems associated with the term "mid-career" I feel it best captures the age group and the middle management roles that most of the research participants held. These women, with the exception of two, were in neither entry-level work nor the upper ranks of the museum hierarchy.

4.4.2 Research Ethics: Confidentiality

Two major concerns shaped and hindered my decision to undertake fieldwork. First, I was concerned about maintaining the research participants confidentiality. Second, I was aware of the emotional dimension involved in interview conversations. Both issues were ethical dilemmas and needed a framework to provide a successful solution if fieldwork was to be undertaken.

Whilst I had approval from the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee to conduct my research I nevertheless had to devise my own system for ensuring

confidentiality of the research participants. At the same time I knew that I could not prevent the women themselves from discussing with colleagues their involvement in the project. For example, after my first interview, a research participant and I had just left the interview room in a museum when a mutual colleague/friend bumped into us in the corridor and exclaimed “ah-ha, caught!” I realised that recognition would be a particular problem in contexts where the museum staff knew me and knew that I was conducting fieldwork interviews. At this point I changed my strategy and interviewed the women in their home so we would not be “caught out” again. In areas where I knew that my identity was not an issue, I felt much freer to interview the women in their workspaces. The choice was invariably theirs, and their workspace was often the only satisfactory option.

Although during the interview stage of the research some women were not concerned about other people knowing they were participating in the research project, once they had read their interview transcript excerpts they raised concerns about being easily identifiable and felt exposed and vulnerable. On these occasions my decision to not identify their name proved sufficient assurance and the women agreed to allow the interview transcript excerpts to be used providing all naming references, such as museum names, position titles, city locations and names of colleagues, had been removed.

At first I used a fictitious name for each research participant as a means to “personalise” the interview excerpts used in the thesis. However later these names were substituted with their “position title” within the museum instead. As the women were speaking about their work it seemed more appropriate to match the interviewees subject position with an employment title rather than to personalise the words with a fictitious name. In some instances when a specific museum has been noted I have not been so clear as to which position the research participant held due to risking the excerpts rightly or wrongly being associated with a particular individual.

4.4.3 *Researcher Bias*

Knowledge is constructed and located within a particular moment in time, space and place, it informs the research process, and shapes the parameters in which the research participants express their ideas and experiences. Although the research participants consent to speak to the researcher, the researcher has the power to identify and label the words and experiences of the research participants (Lather 1992: 87-99). Stanley & Wise (1990: 11) believe that the researcher can dismantle the power that the researcher may hold over the research participants by acknowledging that both the researcher and research participants construct knowledge together during the interview process. Similarly, Helena Court (see Marian Court & Helena Court 1998: 127) attempts to disrupt the power associated with her position as a researcher by making visible the research process and intentions that shaped the text in addition to positioning herself as both a researcher/participant and researcher/author.

Court notes limitations with her attempt to participate as research participant because her interview differed from those of the other research participants. For example, as a researcher/participant Court unintentionally occupied positions both as the expert and as the respondent, while her assigned interviewer took up the position as listener (Court & Court 1998: 128). As a result Court's own interview narrative was a continuation of her authorial control, rather than a reflective conversational exchange that occurred between herself as researcher and the other research participants who were not the authors (Court & Court 1998: 128). Mindful of Court's experiment in dismantling the researcher's power in the knowledge construction process, I too attempted to experiment as a researcher/participant. First, by participating as an interviewee, I was able to pilot the research questions. Second, by being interviewed I hoped to provide a productive avenue for "release" of my own experiences as a past museum professional. I hoped this approach would circumvent an excessive interviewer commentary in the fieldwork interviews.

While I attempted to hold back my voice in the interview there were occasions when I spontaneously shared a similar experience or laughed and exclaimed aloud.

Sometimes the research participants themselves drew me into the conversation with an unsure comment: “Is this alright?” “Am I off track?” “Is this interesting enough?” or “You had a similar experience didn’t you?” In some cases the interviews took on aspects of an intimate conversation and the research participants shared confidential information, emphasising my ethical responsibility to preserve the anonymity of the women who participated.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I outlined the research methods employed during the fieldwork phase and the underlying theories and principles that shaped the data analysis. In the chapters that follow, Chapters Five and Six I use the data to illustrate and support the argument that economic restructuring and the decline in status of the museum professional have provided conditions conducive for feminisation of the museum profession. In Chapter Seven, I investigate the difference that gender plays in the museum; in particular I assess whether the shift in organisational work culture has had a significant impact in terms of gender inequalities within the museum.

Chapter Five

Becoming Corporate

5.1 Introduction

Since the 1980s in a climate of dwindling state support the need for museums to be clear about their role and the benefits they offer the public has become increasingly important (Macdonald 1998: 118). As noted in Chapter Two, Heumann Gurian believes that museums must have clarity of purpose in their mission instead of becoming all things to all people (in Smith 2002: 47). Having a clear purpose not only renders museums better equipped to achieve their goals, it also increases their credibility with their public and funders (ibid). Although museums may differ with regard to the sort of image they wish to present, they have, I argue, become increasingly corporate. This chapter explores the corporatisation of museums in Aotearoa New Zealand and the research participants' responses to working in the new corporate culture. First, I explore how museums have created their new corporate image. Second, I discuss how the institutional adoption of the new management model has dramatically altered the roles, responsibilities and working environments of museum professionals. Third, I consider ways in which this new corporate culture overlaps with processes of feminisation.

Museums in Aotearoa New Zealand have projected a corporate image through a variety of means. In the year 2000 the *North & South* magazine published an article entitled "Museum Wars" which focused on differences between two of Aotearoa New Zealand's largest museums, Te Papa in Wellington and the Auckland War Memorial Museum. Te Papa, the newly built national museum, symbolises a marked shift from the traditional temple-like museum into a visitor-centred destination, "a palace of pleasure and learning" (Chamberlain 2000: 48). In contrast, the recently refurbished Auckland War Memorial Museum prioritises traditional museum activities such as collecting, scholarship and research, as well as the visitor experience (Chamberlain 2000: 54). However, crucial to both museums is that they must justify their continuance in terms of funding. In Chapter One I discussed how the impact of the

radical economic restructuring policies on the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand since 1984 had paved the way for a new business ethos to enter and reshape museum practice in unprecedented ways. Operating within a much tighter economic framework, both Te Papa and the Auckland War Memorial Museum, like other museums in Aotearoa New Zealand, have shifted from a public service model into a public management culture of competitiveness and commercialisation, aggressively selling their image and products to the museum consumer. Interestingly, the research participants commonly used Te Papa as an example of the new culture that has entered the museum sector and shaped museum work. For this reason, I pay close attention to the research participants' responses to the making and operation of Te Papa as symbolic of their overall attitude towards the corporatisation of museums.

At this point clarification on what the term "corporatisation" refers to is required. It in part refers to ways in which museum professionals believe that the business of "selling the museum" to the public has overshadowed the core functions of the museum that are centred on the museum object, such as conservation, collection management and scholarship. Previously back-of-house activities had higher institutional status compared to front-of-house activities; in particular scholarship had more weight than customer-centred functions such as public programmes, education and marketing. Such distinctions about the status and value of various work roles and activities within the museum are difficult to identify in a precise way, nonetheless, in larger museums differences in the valuation of different functions within the museum are implicitly communicated through factors such as disparities in department budgets, departmental representation on management committees, and the status of the department's relationship with the museum director.

Within the context of this newly corporatised environment, creating a new image to "sell" museums has produced a new work culture described by theorists as "new managerialism" (see Halford & Leonard 2001: 86-89; Flynn 1999). New managerialism requires worker flexibility and teamwork, both of which, as I will

show, create tensions within the museum workplace, particularly as it unravels a long held informal museum hierarchy.

Bradley (2000) argues that the new management model has also constructed a new form of worker with different sets of working methods. For example, a people-oriented management style, and particularly one that is increasingly promulgated by women managers, is “especially desirable in a climate of organizational change and cultural reconstruction, since women are more able to empower those in their command and encourage participation and commitment; women are ideal ‘change agents’” (Bradley 2000: 78-79). In other words, women are valued for their “feminine” qualities such as good listening and communication skills and for favouring a consensus decision-making process (Bradley 2000: 78-79; Halford & Leonard 2001: 89-90). A significant number of the research participants were in middle management positions; these are the people who are required to lead teams through organisational change and meet the tight timeframes of project work. However, because traditional strongholds of power continue to operate within the upper ranks of the museum we need to consider the prospect that the newly created and female dominated “middle management” position is symptomatic of processes of feminisation I will return to this point in Chapter Seven.

In addition, an overall tighter economic environment has magnified financial pressures faced by all museums and all museum departments must be able to contribute to the museum’s economic imperatives. In this context, “outsiders,” that is, professionals without specialised museum training, have been imported into the museum to facilitate the transition into this new corporate environment. Outsiders are in effect “change agents”; they have strengths that match the demands of the new managerial model, including skills in management, finance and marketing. Again drawing from Bradley, and also in keeping with the model of feminisation, much of the change agent roles are allocated to women, drawing on gender-based assumptions of their skills in “communication” and ability to “win people over” (2000: 78). However, many museum professionals interviewed feel that the introduction of

outsiders devalues their professional expertise and limits their prospects for professional growth in this changing museum environment.

5.2 *Creating a New Image*

We have had to spruce ourselves up a bit to look better, to get people to come and spend their money [...].

technician/curatorial assistant

In Chapter One I referred to the term “project work,” which included both capital development projects, such as building new museums or extensions for museum shops, cafeterias and education suites, as well as refurbishment projects, whether renovating the whole museum or updating a permanent exhibition. Project work changed not only the physical appearance of museums, but also, as we will see throughout this chapter, the work environment for those employed in them:

There were a lot of tears and tantrums and rows and goodness knows what else. But I think because there were constant deadlines, particularly with the refurbishment project, which is just, when you think about it, a stupendous thing. You are completely redoing the museum while people are still working there. People have been really stressed. It is getting better now but there was a time when there was so much dust and noise, you couldn't think. People were really tense and stretched because of what was going on [...]. Dust, things being drilled through your cables and your computer goes down, sparks flying over things, things falling over top of people, and the whole gamut of stuff.

information services manager

Not only were the physical building projects dramatic but so too the shift to the new corporate culture, which the research participants believed occurred quickly:

Museums have to be more corporate and business like and it has happened quite quickly.

technician/curatorial assistant

The organisation was going through incredible change and it was really fast paced.

New mission objectives, new buildings, new staff and new employment opportunities are some of the positive benefits initiated through becoming corporate. Macdonald (1998: 119-120), in her study on the Museum of Science in London, comments that following the completion of the Science Museum's Corporate Plan of 1987, which involved extensive managerial restructuring, the museum embarked on a large exhibition project called *Food for Thought*. The exhibition-making process symbolised the management model adopted by the museum; for example a team of "interpreters" rather than subject-specialist curators were in charge of the project. The style of the exhibition symbolised the new corporate and commercial image that the museum wished to convey; museum visitors were treated as customers and the aim of the exhibition was to be fun, factual and friendly (Macdonald 1998: 12).

It is as if curators had never taken into account that they do have an audience that they are trying to reach!

curator

Similarly, project work in museums in Aotearoa New Zealand is closely aligned with organisational transformation and the introduction of the new management model with its paradigm of accountability, fiscal restraint and financial self-sufficiency. Further, as noted in Chapter One, it is comparatively easier to attract revenue for capital development projects than core business functions, such as building maintenance and staff salaries, thus project work can provide temporary distraction from the museum's underlying financial pressure stemming from the continual reduction in their budgets: "Museums have to generate their own funds as well as relying on ratepayer funds; now they have to operate like businesses." (Ellis 2001: 41)

Project work has provided growth in the museum sector; both people new to museums and experienced museum professionals have had the chance to learn new skills, primarily management and team skills. Later I will discuss how these skills have been subtly targeted towards women. Of all the museum development projects in Aotearoa

New Zealand, Te Papa has had the most substantial impact. In the words of a museum professional working in a back-of-house⁴⁵ management role at Te Papa:

I think that without realising it Te Papa has changed people's perceptions of museums [including] people who work within it. My standards have changed and it was really interesting to realise that too. I think that what Te Papa is doing for the rest of the museum world is creating new standards.

collection manager

Te Papa appeared throughout the interview conversations as a very powerful model of restructuring and the changes evident in the museum sector. Halford & Leonard (2001: 94) comment that women interpret organisational culture in many different ways and in turn women take up different positions within the organisational culture undergoing radical change according to how they interpret it. The research participants' response towards the making and operation of Te Papa served as an effective measure of their overall attitude towards museums becoming corporate. Thus in this section I discuss the research participants' responses to Te Papa as a symbolic example of their views of the corporatisation of museums in general. For example, all of the research participants commented about the way Te Papa was seen to integrate its commercial imperative with the visitor experience. One front-of-house manager working at Te Papa commented:

We are becoming a much more commercial organisation, so even though we primarily still get money from the public sector we have to operate in a commercial way, and that means we have a lot of people who come from the commercial/private sector world coming into our organisation. We've got processes in place, like businesses, or we're always business streaming, building business case developments, that sort of thing.

front-of-house manager

In the making and operation of Te Papa, emphasis shifted from the traditional museum roles of collecting, research and education into a commercially focused

⁴⁵ The research participants divided the museum's activities into two distinct areas, front-of-house, which included education and public programmes, exhibition design, visitor research and marketing, and back-of-house, involving collection management, curatorial services and conservation.

visitor-centred organisation. This shift included a different approach to the way exhibitions are organised, the level of information offered within the exhibition space, the degree of computer interfaces accompanying the exhibitions, and the number of income-generating add-ons designed to enhance the museum experience. In her attempt to define what Te Papa is, one woman who worked back-of house at Te Papa observed rather dryly:

Te Papa is more a museum than an art gallery and not even really a museum – it is kind of like a fun park that has little pockets of museology in it.

back-of-house specialist

Some research participants were cautious about Te Papa; this included both people who worked at Te Papa and others who did not. These women were critical of Te Papa's exhibition strategy; they believed that the extensive use of technology, fewer objects in the exhibition space, and the reduction of detailed information provided in the exhibitions resulted in the loss of the very "quality" which made museums distinct from other cultural venues. This is illustrated in the words of an information services manager, a curator, and an educator who were exceptionally critical about Te Papa's shift in focus:

In this new environment, we are caught up in this sort of fall-out from Te Papa and how wonderful it is [...]. It is [important] to find a good balance between embracing the new and keeping what is best of the old. I mean that's not anything earth shattering; but it is still trying to convince people of that.

Information services manager

The problem with Te Papa is that it is too try-hard. It is trying to do too many things for too many people. They can't appreciate that you can really touch people just by doing a really, really good [...] show rather than having all the doo-dackies and the whizz bangs and video screens and stuff like that, and the endless soundtracks going on in the background.

curator

Our director is slightly influenced by Te Papa so a lot of the curators and staff here are struggling with the concepts he is trying to push through.

We're trying to find a balance rather than becoming a huge entertainment centre. I think that you have to be really careful and make sure there is that balance, don't take the oldness out of museums as well, that is part of their character.

education manager

Overall, these women were not against innovative exhibition techniques; rather they felt that it was important to obtain a balance between “new” methods and the “traditional” object-rich, information-rich exhibitions.

On a less symbolic level it is important to note here is that many of the research participants' criticism of Te Papa, particularly those who were not Te Papa employees, focused on the amount of government money Te Papa receives. There has always been regional rivalry between the national museum and other museums, including the large museums in the metropolitan areas, particularly Auckland and Dunedin (see Chamberlain 2000), as well as the small and medium size museums throughout Aotearoa New Zealand (see Entwisle 1990: 16). Rivalry stems from Te Papa's funding, which comes from both central government and, as noted by one research participant, levies from local city councils. As one Te Papa employee commented:

There is a lot of professional jealousy [...] that we have so much government funding whilst lots of provincial museums run on the smell of an oily rag.

manager working at Te Papa

Another research participant who worked in a South Island museum offered a different perspective, she focused on her museums regional distance from the cosmopolitan North Island museums:

We are just so isolated down here and (whispers) we are slightly anti Te Papa and slightly anti Auckland as well.

manager of a regional museum

Whether critical of Te Papa or not, the research participants who worked outside of Te Papa could all see a positive spill-over effect brought about from a high level of public interest in Te Papa, which in turn would filter into an increase of public interest in their own museums. The key phrase noted below, “*even though it is a place like Te Papa*”, infers some ambivalence towards the success of the style of museology Te Papa practices, but acceptance of Te Papa’s “popularity.” They particularly saw value in the way Te Papa aggressively sought new audiences, although they did not necessarily agree with the museology that Te Papa represented. Two women from different institutions, an educator and a curator, made very similar comments:

I have read a criticism about Te Papa that said they were aiming for the lowest common denominator and it seems to be a much more market-driven exercise than has previously been done for any other museum [...]. At least they are getting people through the door and perhaps that will have a flow-on advantage for the rest of us. If we get people from different cultural groups going to museums just for a start, even though it is a place like Te Papa.

education manager

Their numbers are up and their revenue [...] it is not a criticism or anything, at least they're getting people into museums who don't usually visit a museum, even if it is a place like Te Papa. [This] I believe will have a flow on effect and we will see numbers increasing as far as those communities visiting museums in general, and that can only be good for us.

curator

Aside from its ability to draw in new and diverse audiences, a significant influence stemming from Te Papa was its commitment to working with the community, particularly Maori and Pacific Island groups. This practice is also evident in other museums in Aotearoa New Zealand, but will not be discussed to any extent in this chapter.

Underpinning all of Te Papa’s activities was “customer focus” and “popular appeal,” which to the research participants marked a shift in emphasis from museum collections to the museum visitor. In this shift, services such as exhibition design,

public programmes, marketing, education, and visitor research are considered core to the museum's business of providing a visitor experience, but also for their potential to generate revenue. Although museums have not abdicated the established tradition of collecting, researching and preservation, customer focus is now dominant. One means of shifting the focus to the museum visitor and customer service is through the introduction of a new style of management. In the next section, I explore the research participants' experiences and responses to working in the new managerial corporate culture, which required new sets of skills. The skills valued under the ethos of new managerialism include the ability to operate in a team environment, which requires greater worker flexibility as well as the ability to work within tight timeframes and restricted budgets. Not all skills could be learnt on-the-job and in some instances outsiders were brought in to fill the gaps.

5.3 *New Managerialism: Shifting Focus*

One assumption that has long received consensus among organisations attempting change is that it is through the appointment of new managers with a different and 'effective' management style that change can most successfully be delivered [...]. 'New' managers tend to be highly motivated, resourceful, and able to shift the frame of reference beyond established norms and procedures (Halford & Leonard 2001: 86).

Shifting the frame of reference within the museum sector meant a shift of focus from collections to the museum visitor; it also meant a shift from a public service model into a corporate management culture. But, as we shall see, some of the research participants felt strongly that in the process of creating a corporate and popular image, the specialised skills and expertise of certain museum roles had been devalued. Certain characteristics are valued within the "new" management culture, namely flexibility, teamwork and the ability to work quickly whilst achieving set budget and performance targets (Halford & Leonard 2001: 86). In addition a "hard edge" or a "go-getting" attitude is desirable (Halford & Leonard 2001: 86); the term used frequently by the research participants was "robust." Bradley argues that under the

new managerial culture employees have to prove their worth in ways such as being able to work long hours, which fits within “certain forms of middle-class masculinity” (2000: 218). Women can work in this culture if they deliver on these same terms, indicating that while certain components of the work place have feminised, the culture of work has not (2000: 91). Museum professionals at all levels are expected to be committed to their organisation as demonstrated by working competently and efficiently within this corporate management culture.

Following the radical organisational transformation of museums in Aotearoa New Zealand, it perhaps comes as no surprise that a high number of the research participants had recently been promoted into a middle management role. Those new to the management role found the work “challenging” and “stimulating” but there were certainly some difficult aspects. While on the one hand these women noted that they had support from their own managers by “having faith” in their abilities to take on the challenge, at the same time they had no form of institutional training to match their new responsibilities. They were expected to “learn on the job” or “sink or swim”:

[...] you just sank or swam and fortunately I swam [...]. I think it required a really robust personality. There were times when I guess I did not handle the pressure as well as I could have but there was no organisational sort of training or anything like that.

public programmes manager

The research participants who were managers, particularly middle managers in large museums, noticed that overall workloads had increased, specifically administrative tasks relating to the museum’s accountability mechanisms under the new management model. These middle managers also talked about the importance of “putting systems in place,” suggesting that they were the ones who were responsible for instigating the transition into the new corporate work culture. The public programmes manager quoted above commented that in order to assist with her transition into her new management role she was always clear about the “ultimate goal”:

It was getting the work done on time and on budget and so I always came back to that.

public programmes manager

Achieving the “ultimate goal,” whether the installation of a major exhibition or the end of an extensive refurbishment project, often involved tight time frames. This meant that staff had to work quickly but also hold the ability to be flexible.

5.3.1 Flexibility

Working in the new corporate culture required staff to be multi-skilled and flexible. Bradley notes two forms of flexibility, numerical flexibility and functional flexibility. Numerical flexibility relates to the workforce as a whole, whereby employers can employ part-time, seasonal, casual and temporary staff according to production demands (Bradley 1999: 124). Functional flexibility relates to an increase in the range of skills and job tasks carried out by employees (Bradley 1999: 126); this is the form of flexibility that I am most interested in. Some of the research participants have received the need to be “flexible” with some degree of scepticism. For example, they view it as a means for organisations to cover for staff absences, whether temporary or permanent, without the extra expense of hiring and training new staff. In addition, while employers have expectations that their staff will be “flexible” this requirement has not been met with sufficient training or extra remuneration. Bradley suggests that in the move towards flexibility in fact indicates a move away from specialised role expertise, thus representing a form of deskilling (1999: 127). Later in Chapter Seven we shall see that museum professionals have long held onto the idea of a culture of expertise, as it not only defines their professional status but also permits a degree of autonomy, both of which have been eroded under the culture of new managerialism.

While being highly desirable a public programmes manager observed that the ability to be multi-skilled and flexible was not always easy to attain:

You have to be multi-skilled and multi-dimensional all the time [...], have a broad range of skills and an incredible flexibility. [...]. I think that is a really big challenge to always be like that [...]. I don't think everybody can do that and finding people who can respond to any situation is getting harder and harder. That is what I really value in my colleagues, people who can basically cope with any situation that comes up without being panicked about it.

public programmes manager

Some research participants observed that with the requirement to be flexible, they had difficulty in understanding the specific roles and responsibilities of their position. One curator commented that the museum where she worked was always changing:

The one constant is that there is no constancy and we've never had business as usual. I've always been waiting for the next bomb to drop, there has always been restructuring [...]. I think that I use the word fire fighting a lot, because that is what my job seems to be. You don't have enough time to plan and nothing pans out the way it was supposed to. So it is not just that I am in limbo at the moment, I have never really been sure of what is happening. Things have always been temporary and you constantly have to justify yourself and sell yourself to the institution.

curator

When change is constant, staff can feel confused and uncertain about their specific work responsibilities and the relationship of their work role with the overall mission objectives of the museum. Part of this uncertainty relates to financial pressures placed on museums; as a cost-cutting mechanism staff numbers have been reduced or departing staff members have not been replaced:

When somebody leaves you do not know if they are going to be replaced. One has to be human putty and fill another gap [...].

curator

A few women had criticisms about the way staff were “shuffled” because of organisational restructuring during the project work phase. Most evident in the large museums is the redeployment of staff into areas where they have little interest or experience, and with little consultation:

They have redeployed a lot of staff [...] a lot of them unwillingly, and a lot of them not well matched to their new positions. They were kind of nudged sideways.

information services

There's been a lot of reshuffling [...]. Rather than pay people out redundancy they shuffle them over.

curator

One curator was particularly critical of her organisation's continual change, which consequently left ambiguity surrounding the role and responsibilities of her work. She also viewed it as an intentional strategy utilised by management in general to make staff "work harder" – flexibility was a code for exploitation:

My job description is very loose and generic [...]. I think it is symptomatic of the whole work situation across the professions where people are expected to be ultra-flexible and multi-skilled and all those euphemisms for working longer and harder and doing more things.

curator

Significantly, in this particular case the museum was in a legal position to enforce this culture of work flexibility. This curator recounts how she felt pressured by her union,⁴⁶ the Public Services Association (PSA) and museum management to sign a "flexibility clause" in exchange for a small amount of money. During the interview conversation she recounted her disappointment in her union during the rapid expansion and radical transformation of her museum. She believed that the union had little power to maintain labour conditions, but also that the union appeared to have sided with management by advising union members to sign the "flexibility clause." In another museum, staff were expected to not only be flexible in their work schedule but also accept "temporary promotions":

⁴⁶ In Evans' 1992 (p. 29) survey of 125 women museum professionals working in Aotearoa New Zealand the majority of respondents, 62 per cent, belonged to a union. Most had membership with their local government officers union, followed by the PSA and the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI).

You are temporarily promoted for a project and then you are put back into your place again, but it does not work, people tend to outgrow their jobs.

technician/curatorial assistant

The director of this museum had devised a strategy of temporary promotions to give staff a chance to be challenged. However, this also meant people were placed in work roles irrespective of their suitability for the position. Some also were reluctant to return to their previous role once the project work had been completed because they felt that with the new skills learnt they had since outgrown that position.

5.3.2 Teamwork

Closely connected to the theme of flexibility was teamwork. Through the use of the teamwork employees can be easily monitored. With each employee working within tight timeframes to meet “departmental targets” or “project milestone”, little room is left for individualism, a culture previously favoured within the museum, particularly by curators. In the next chapter we shall see how the threat of job loss or limited alternative employment prospects allows little scope for dissent. Under the new management ethos, the practice of teamwork and flexibility is sold to employees as a “challenge.” In other words, junior to mid-level staff are encouraged to take on extra responsibility without the need to alter their position description and/or increase their salary (Halford & Leonard 2001: 91). One junior staff member observed:

We have this sort of tricky system at work where we are put in teams for exhibition and structural development, for all sorts of things. I think this happens everywhere these days. In a recent gallery development I was there as a curator which was slightly awkward because it almost undermined the curator I worked for [...].

technician/curatorial assistant

This comment suggests that the requirements for both flexibility and teamwork are not always comfortable for museum workers or their relationships with one another. One of the ideals of teamwork is that it fosters “consultative decision-making” and portrays the idea of “equality”:

I guess the reason for this teamwork thing is that everyone is equal and ideas are accepted on an equal footing.

exhibition design manager

Ideally team members are expected to “interact in terms of complementary skills,” however there is also evidence of “conflicting interests” between various museum professionals, as well as between museum professionals and management (Karp 1997: 12). One site of conflict arises from the fact that teams comprise a diverse range of staff from different fields of expertise and with different priorities. For example, conservators, curators, and collection managers whose expertise is with museum objects can experience conflict with educators, public programmes personnel, marketers, and exhibition designers whose expertise is with the museum visitor. As a conservator commented:

We do many things in teams where our individual role in the team does not necessarily turn out to have anything to do with our qualifications and the reason why we came to the museum in the first place [...]. I mean there are explainable reasons for [the director's] strange choices. I have opinions about what exhibits should and should not happen, but I feel my role here is just to talk about what will work and won't work from my specific field and I don't really have any energy to get involved in other things.

conservator

The research participants who were responsible for managing teams commented about the need to develop strong inter-personal skills, especially when dealing with staff holding “strong opinions”:

Being a team manager is really tough actually, because you have all these people who have their own agendas.

public programmes manager

The research participants who were team managers noted that it was frequently difficult to get all the team members from varying disciplines to agree on various points of the project or exhibition.

Other problems noted by managers of teams were based around subordinates who were not “performing,” as commented on by a public programmes manager:

I rely heavily on some really highly professional people in my team to deliver and they have. There have been a couple who haven't and that's been really tough actually, but when you have a strong team they can carry the weak ones.

public programmes manager

This manager believed that part of the impaired performance arose from the fact that some of her team members were having difficulty absorbing the new commercial imperatives shaping the everyday practice of the museum:

It is a new museum environment. It is a new venture; its commercial imperative comes into everything we do. Just grasping that has been enormously difficult for some people.

public programmes manager

For example, she commented that she needed her “whole team to contribute to the revenue generation capacity that we have.” She was able to justify this position by stating that visitor research conducted by the museum she worked for concerning charges for certain of the museum's services such as special exhibitions or audio guided tours, found that “people are happy to pay for something extra”:

You need to structure yourself in such a way that what you offer the public gives them a good experience and contributes to the bottom line. There will be free things to do, but most things that people experience other than just getting in the door will be charged.

public programmes manager

Post-1984, under the new management model the museum visitor is commonly referred to as the customer and this customer focus underpins all museum activities. But in the process museums have also become revenue focused, radically transforming the work culture and organisational infrastructure of the museum. One curator observed:

There seems to be a new culture generally within museums. It seems to have grown up around the generation of revenue and customer focus, and all that kind of management speak.

curator

5.3.3 *Economic Pressures*

Another important skill required under the new management model is the efficient operation of budgets. This skill has not come readily or easily for the research participants and, as noted in Chapter One, because of a reduction in funding the museum sector is under enormous pressure to survive. An assistant curator and a public programmes manager explained:

We've been left without running costs, or a good proportion of them. We are really strapped for cash.

technician/assistant curator

I have a revenue target for this financial year, it was [...] outrageously high and we're not going to meet it through revenue generation so we will have to make savings.

public programmes manager

All of the research participants spoke of new fiscal responsibilities entering into their daily practice, which formed part of their performance reviews. These responsibilities included “meeting budgets” or “revenue targets.” If these targets could not be met, they were required to “make savings” or “generate income.” There was also an expectation to provide “value” for any money spent through providing a “quality product,” whether exhibitions or services. In some instances some of the research participants felt ill equipped for the new challenges and many were feeling strained from overwork and a lack of resources. An information assistant observed:

The catch-cry is “budgets, budgets, we don't have room in the budgets for this” yet at the same time people are really overworked and could use some help.

information services

Juggling the dual requirements of balancing the budget and providing quality service has been difficult for most of the research participants to adjust to, accept, or understand. Most of the research participants were unsure about the consequences of having the economic discourse operate through all museum departments. For instance, those who worked directly with the museum visitor, particularly educators and public programmers, raised concern that “quantity” was often used to measure “quality.” In the words of an education manager:

I don't know how management judges quality and quantity. How do you measure my job, how do I know what I am giving is quality? Do we say at the end of the year we answered 2000 letters, is that what you want to know, or that we inspired 50 children? What is the most important? That's where I think corporatisation of the museum is wrong, because you can't quantify those sorts of things, we're not producing cardboard boxes, we're not producing some sort of capital that can be counted and ticked off. We're judged on what seems to be how many people walk through the door, whether they are using the toilet or visiting the museum.

education manager

Echoing museum literature (McKinlay Douglas 1995), there was strong concern amongst the research participants that visitor numbers were only one way of measuring the museum's performance and therefore success. Nevertheless, under the new management model museums and their staff are required to place an increasing emphasis on “outcomes” and on being able to demonstrate that museum activity can meet the needs of its customers (McKinlay Douglas 1995: ii). Those services seen as least suited to define their departmental outcomes in relation to commercial activity were back-of-house activities, such as collection management, conservation and research:

In terms of value, connecting with and looking after the collection, we can't measure the commercial spin-off on those sorts of things. I don't know how you would do it.

public programmes manager

Placing an economic value on museum services has affected how the research participants view their work and how they assess the value of other departments within the museum. Those who worked in the front-of house area, particularly those who were relatively new to museums and/or those who were managers, found it more difficult to value back-of-house activities because they were perceived as harder to measure in economic terms. Two managers, both of whom had worked in museums for over five years and both working in the front-of-house activities, perceived collecting as a huge drain on the museum's resources in terms of cost and the amount of space the collections required, and wondered about the ability of back-of-house areas to survive the new environment. These two managers believed that with the museum's increased emphasis on commercial activities, services such as collection management, conservation and curatorial research would soon experience budget cutbacks if their services were not directly associated with the visitor experience:

I still haven't come to grips with the idea of collecting – why we collect stuff and why you have to have heaps and heaps of things. It is probably because I have become much more aware of how much collecting costs in relation to caring for the collections.

marketing manager

The whole museum is commercially focused, or should be [...] and that is another cultural change that is probably going to happen. Everyone will have to be more commercially focused.

public programmes manager

Another factor commented on by all of the research participants from all areas of the museum was that working in the new corporate culture meant working within tight timeframes. Museum practice, overall, has become more “fast paced.” Museum services that operate back-of-house feel pressured from this increase in pace. One conservator commented about the quick timeframe in which permanent exhibitions were refurbished:

I do not think doing these six-month preparation galleries unusual. I partly understand that they need to stay looking new and different to suit funders, I've bought into that amount of the corporate spiel, but there are some things that just can't totally be sped up. With my line of work, I cannot turn

things around fast and most of the results are more complicated than anybody really wants to be bothered with [...].

conservator

While most of the research participants agreed that some form of change needed to occur in museums, some were not wholly convinced that “becoming corporate,” with all that this entails, was the best solution. For this conservator, conservation practice is methodical, and knowing how long a “treatment” for an object will take is often “uncertain.” She felt frustrated that the complexity and technical contingencies of conservation were considered “too complicated” or “detailed” in the new work environment. Other research participants also noted conflict between their expectations about their work role and achieving the project goal within the expected timeframe.

In general terms, there was some acceptance from the research participants, whether they were in agreement or not, that museums had become more corporate. This had filtered into their everyday language and shaped their view of their work:

I have learnt a lot of management speak. I learnt labels to things that I had been doing for years but never knew what it was called.

education manager

If you stuff up, the museum is going to look really, really bad, amateurish even.

information services manager

5.3.4 Outsiders

Although the new corporate climate has allowed experienced museum professionals to acquire new skills, all of the research participants commented that becoming corporate has meant certain skills have needed to be imported into the museum. “Outsiders” have been employed, some because of their skills in management, marketing and finance. As noted earlier, when an organisation undertakes a change in direction, a new style of “management” is often required to lead and inspire staff to carry out the necessary tasks (2001: 89). In some instances increasing emphasis was placed on “feminine qualities” such as “good communication,” and a “consensus

decision-making style” which has opened up spaces for women (Halford & Leonard 2001: 90). Good communication, which includes empathy and the ability to listen, is particularly valued in terms of the customer service ethos. Research participants from all areas of the museum commented on the need for good management skills:

A senior curator spoke of an occasion when an “outsider” was brought in on a temporary contract to manage the museum. This curator/manager recounted how she was able to experience “good management,” a skill she felt was missing not only in herself but in the museum sector overall:

Museum people need to respect that being a good manager is not an easy thing to be and there are very few of them out there. I think museum people are extraordinarily bad at people management, especially in recognising people's differences and how to get around that.

curator/manager

I thought, “god they're going to bring in a manager,” you know, all that. But the difference was that she believed in us as professionals. She said, ‘I will learn from you and I will manage you’ and it worked really well. She'd come into my office and say “in 10 minutes tell me why this is important so that when I go to the Trust Board tonight I am armed.” On another occasion I was in a terrible situation with one of my staff, I was about to kill her, but the manager got us to talk the issues through without anybody hating each other and THAT was skillful management as I have never experienced before.

curator/manager

But the need for employing outsiders was a deeply contested issue. The research participants who were not “outsiders” talked about experiencing some difficulty with working with outsiders, particularly with getting outsiders to understand the nuances of museum work. The research participants commented that this factor not only highlighted the many different perspectives about museums held by various museum staff, but also how these varying perspectives in turn produced conflict in the workplace. In the view of the research participants who defined themselves as

“museum professionals,” “outsiders” were categorised as those who had no training in museology or hands-on experience in museums and therefore had limited knowledge about how to care for museum objects or understanding about the purpose of museums – to collect, research and educate. The influx of outsiders produced uncertainty for some of the museum professionals and their belief that museum work required people skilled in specific areas of expertise. This was a particular concern with the research participants who were involved in collection management, and curatorial and conservation work. In the words of a conservator who, like most conservators working in Aotearoa New Zealand, had undertaken specialist training overseas:

The trend right now is to employ people from outside the museum world. The directors think that it would bring much more expertise and not hold us back in that old museum, ivory tower way.

conservator

Our previous manager was totally out of touch; she viewed us curators as those wonderful creatures who wandered around like medieval scholars.

curator

Not only did these specialist museum professionals feel that outsiders lacked sufficient understanding about the intricacies of museum work, as noted above, they also felt that employing outsiders in significant numbers indicated that the value and need for specialist museum professionals was being eroded. In other words, specialist museum professionals raised concern that with the dramatic increase of outsiders, the level of professionalism in museums would drop.⁴⁷ Again, the conservator commented:

⁴⁷ Defining what comprises a museum professional(?) has been subject to extensive debate. See Van Mensch (1989), Kavanagh (1991), Wittlin (1970) and Weil (1990).

I am worried about bringing people in with no museum background for a variety of reasons. It just illuminates why do we have museum training courses anyway. Why do we have a profession called museology? And why does any of the rest of us have credentials and qualifications in museums if we can just go out and employ anybody to do the job?

conservator

Strategically, outsiders are useful to the museum director because they are not inculcated with museum theory or culture and have no allegiances with certain departments within the museum. One assistant curator noted:

Our director employs people who have had no previous [museum] experience. He wants fresh, and I can see why, but he has almost gone too far the other way.

technician/assistant curator

The new type of professional entering the museum sector has different notions about museums; in the view of museum directors employing outsiders they add a component of “freshness.” They also have the necessary skills to implement the changes associated with economic restructuring and the management model. Two research participants who were both outsiders and both managers noted:

I think the director saw me as quite refreshing, quite bubbly, outgoing, full of “new ideas” [...]. I think that the director’s perception at the time was to get some freshness from the outside coming in and that would help the change, just slowly break it down.

exhibition design manager

I liked the idea of repositioning museums.

marketing manager

Interestingly, the research participants who were “outsiders” considered themselves as such; they knew they had been employed as “change agents” and knew that not all museum staff approved of their appointment.

Some women, particularly curators, were as critical of employment of outsiders as they were with the museum's shift in direction. Thus with the influx of outsiders, conflicts frequently occurred concerning legitimacy of expertise between the manager's right to manage and the museum professional's competence (Flynn 1999: 25). These conflicts were based around outsiders having a lack of understanding of the intricacies and details required of museum work, and in some instances not respecting the museum professional's specific field of expertise. As a public programmes manager stated:

With the influx of new people who came to the museum who had no museum background, I would have to explain to them "well actually I know how this works, I've done this before". A lot of time was spent bringing them up to speed on what you already know about this environment.

public programmes manager

Conversely, museum professionals sometimes lacked respect for the skills and expertise that outsiders brought with them. Conflict between outsiders and museum professionals frequently came to a head during teamwork when subject specialists and outsiders were required to work cooperatively. Conflict was a particular problem if the outsider was the team manager. A curator made the following comments about her outsider manager:

They don't understand the subtleties of producing outcomes, like the idea of networks, our manager, an outsider, could only understand doing a favour if there was an immediate material outcome, the idea of fostering a good relationship was beyond her. Copybook management just does not work in this sort of environment.

curator

In another instance, an exhibition designer who was an outsider and a manager of a team felt that museum professionals did not readily accept her specialisation as a manager and as a designer with commercial experience. She commented that during the team process of consensus decision-making, her expertise was frequently undermined because it was assumed that her outsider status meant she was less experienced about the "museum business":

The thing that I find really weird here is, if you have specialised in the field and have the training, it is still not believed or readily accepted, it is still a team thing. The team's ideas outweigh those of a specialised person.

exhibition design manager

Becoming corporate has been difficult for many of the research participants. For example, one curator commented during the interview that although she did not approve of her museum's shift in direction, she felt limited in how far she could criticise the museum where she worked because:

There is this whole emphasis on being corporate, I have to try and keep my nose clean and not say the wrong thing, which causes quite a bit of stress.

curator

5.3.5 *Curators*

The research participants who were curators noted that as museums moved towards a new management and business practice, the older object-centred values of curatorial practice were characterised in a very particular way. These curators were aware that they were viewed as those who needed to change the most. They felt that their role had been stereotyped to characterise the "old museology," and in turn their role had been scrutinised and reassessed in terms of the new management model. The curators were the most critical of the change in the museums' direction. They also felt both vulnerable and frustrated with the evident decline in status of their role within the museum infrastructure. Three curators commented:

Curators used to be at the top of the bundle, now they're not.

curator

I've got a feeling that with the next line of restructuring they're going to turn curators and collection managers into one thing. There's no acknowledgement of specialisation of both jobs.

curator

Management finds it a wee bit frightening to leave these "poxy old curators" with any kind of control. Curators are meant to develop concepts for exhibitions, but it is felt that it is impossible for them to be left to their own

devices because they will do an exhibit on nail heads or something like that. They need to be controlled.

curator

Evident from the research participants' conversations is that the culture of museum work focuses on the collective product, such as the exhibition or public programmes, but the process draws heavily on the work of individuals. Balancing the new management work ethos of efficiency, tight timeframes and teamwork with the creative process of exhibition making has not been without conflict. Curators in particular experienced difficulty with incorporating certain aspects of the new management model, such as restricted budgets and tight timeframes into their creative endeavours. We're going through a rough patch at the moment [...]. The Project Team, the people who set and timetable all of the exhibitions and all of the curatorial and conservation work, are being set by people who have absolutely no understanding of the work involved or the time involved. They treat us as if they are building buildings, or building a hotel and it doesn't tend to have sympathy for curators and conservation workers or the objects. Objects just don't figure; they hardly enter the Project Team's mind.

curator

Conducting research and working out concepts for exhibitions was often an intuitive process and required an isolated workspace with few distractions, thus the ethos of teamwork was also difficult to incorporate into their creative work – especially when teams comprised of “big personalities.” In earlier chapters the research participants spoke of the difficulties that arose from conflict with their colleagues, or “personality clashes.” What was also evident was that such personality clashes were often associated with “informal strongholds of power” within the museum. Central to curators was that their colleagues and senior management accepted their ideas. Of the research participants six were working in some curatorial capacity. One curator commented on her role:

Having ideas is the only way that you distinguish yourself really.

curator

Ideas provide the foundation of the democratic ideal of exhibition and knowledge creation. The tradition of having your “ideas” accepted consolidated your position within the museum hierarchy, particularly in the case of curators. There was a tendency by some of the research participants to conflate philosophical disagreements to personality clashes, ascribing people with autocratic behaviour or holding personal agendas:

Its not like there is a healthy debate, they're right and this is the way it should go.

curator

There are lots of personal agendas and there are lots of political agendas.

exhibition design manager

The competitiveness to find museum work or attain recognition for a museum professional's work adds complexity to the different fields of power within the museum. This is further complicated by the small size of the museum sector, which facilitates the informal information (gossip) network and exacerbates the politics. For these reasons, the research participants were very aware that the museum world, a world where they had invested so much personally through their passion and their commitment could also be a “back-stabbing” world:

I don't know how long I can sustain this profession; you get your reality checks and it is politically ruthless. At any time someone else could come along and undermine me. That's the bit I don't like, but it is a reality I have to face, but that is just the business. Even if you do a good job your back could still be on the line if you haven't played your politics right.

curator

Only one of the curators I talked to was in a middle management position. Another curator had doubts about whether she would ever be promoted to such a position. Even if curators were managers, with organisational restructuring the lines of management and authority had shifted, and in one particular museum, curators were not involved in upper-management decision-making procedures:

I was temporarily promoted to the middle strata and kind of put in management, but only when management wanted it. Although I have had management experience I can't actually get up the ladder unless I bring on board another skill, like a management degree or something like that, and even then I suspect it would be questionable if I would get promoted.

curator

On paper everyone is equal but I am involved in a middle management group which has no curators on it so that sets me apart. I know information before the curators do, or I've partaken in decision-making for public programmes, gallery development, the running of education programmes – so there is a difference in structure.

exhibition design manager

These comments suggest that curators in the larger museums are not wholly involved in organisational decision-making. Significantly, curators appear to be less involved in undertaking any change-work that has consolidated the shift in organisational culture (Brooks & Harfield 2000) and in turn, curators seem to have been most adversely affected from this cultural shift.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined how the research participants described the changes in their work roles and responsibilities due to the new management model that has been incorporated into museums. Change had produced uncertainty for some of the research participants in three ways. First, the nature of work flexibility has fragmented work roles and responsibilities. Second, the trend towards utilising teamwork at the expense of the specialisation and expertise of museum professionals is different to some of the research participants' idea of the skills required for museum work. Third, the increase of project work in the museum sector has increased the demand for new sets of skills, often skills that museum professionals lacked, thus contributing towards the increase in the number of outsiders employed in museums. These three factors are products of the new management model, instigated by economic rationalism and the drive for fiscal responsibility, and thus producing a

dramatic cultural shift in the rationale of museums and significant upheaval for museum professionals. One curator summarised the complexity:

We've got different professional cultures, and some of those have worked together for a long time and know each other, like curators, collection managers and conservators, and there are new cultures like marketing, finances and fundraising. The new public programmes, which are different from the old education officers, they have totally different cultures again, and they are not used to the museological environment either. Then you have managers, who are generic managers, they could manage a supermarket, they could manage a museum, or so they think.

curator

The cultural shift associated with the new management model is most evident in, but not exclusive to, large museums such as Te Papa. The research participants' responses to Te Papa were evaluated as a response to changes in the museum sector on a broader level. Some embraced Te Papa's commercial initiative and exhibition techniques favourably; these women tended to be in management positions within Te Papa. Yet some women who worked in Te Papa, and others who did not, criticised Te Papa for these same reasons. Despite their personal opinions of Te Papa, many believed that Te Papa's ability to draw in diverse audiences would have a spill-over effect in encouraging people to visit museums in other regions in Aotearoa New Zealand. Lastly, the ethos of the new management model evident in Te Papa and other museums in Aotearoa New Zealand has altered the museum's infrastructure, requiring museum staff to become "more corporate." Change involves the museum shifting its focus from collections to the museum visitor. In the process the importance of those whose work encompasses marketing, public programmes, visitor research, education, and exhibition design, has increased. In addition, the stereotypical image of curators as "intellectuals stuck in their own world" with no contribution to the "economic reality" of the museum has been strategically utilised to allow this new corporate culture to seep through, thus effectively devaluing what was previously considered a highly skilled and valued role in the museum. In the next chapter, I discuss the impact of this cultural shift on the research participants' commitment to museums.

Chapter Six:

Passionate About Museums – Survival or Commitment?

6.1 Introduction

During the interview conversations, I asked the women to tell me how they entered museum work. Although the research participants' route into museum work varied, once working in museums they invariably were struck by three factors: the diversity of the museum collections,⁴⁸ the diversity of the skills, interests and personalities of the museum staff, and the pleasure derived from working with the visiting public. Some women, both Maori and Pakeha, felt a strong care-taking responsibility for the preservation and interpretation of taonga. In this chapter, I explore in more detail the type of work environment produced by the introduction of the new management model and the spill-over effect this has had on the research participants' overall commitment to museums.

In this chapter I focus on two themes. First, the research participants clearly had a strong commitment and passion for museums and for their work and therefore I assess how their "psychological contract" with the museum has altered since the establishment of the new managerial work ethos. In essence, the psychological contract comprises reciprocal obligations held between the individual employee and the organisation and operates on two levels, transactional and relational (Brooks & Harfield 2000). On a transactional level, the organisation provides their employees with a paid position in exchange for their energy, skill, and effort. The relational category comprises the "socio-emotional" elements such as loyalty, support and commitment to the organisation (Brooks & Harfield 2000). The wearing away of the research participants' passion for museums signifies a break in the relational category of the psychological contract, especially as this had contributed to a decline in workplace satisfaction for these women. Similarly, feminisation theorists also note

⁴⁸ For museums without collections, diversity stems from the exhibition schedule. Examples include Lopdell House Gallery and te tuhi – the mark, previously the Fisher Gallery in Pakuranga, Manukau City.

evidence of a decline in workplace satisfaction for those employed in occupations that were feminising (Chiu & Leicht 1999). Shifts in the work culture had negatively impacted on employees' sense of well-being within the organisation, which leads to the second theme of this chapter.

Second, I describe and assess whether the research participants' accounts of their work experiences relate to processes of feminisation. This includes attempting to differentiate between everyday concerns regarding heavy workloads from signs of feminisation, such as a perceptible decline in work conditions. It also involves distinguishing between concerns that relate to a tight labour market, which includes museum professionals needing to move sideways or backwards in order to gain entry into the sector, with the devaluation in the status of museum work.

Overall, the research participants' responses to the work culture produced by the new management model were contradictory. While these women conveyed a strong sense of passion for their work and for museums in general they also appeared to be "surviving", surviving both the difficulty of working in the new environment but also surviving by choosing to remain working in the museum. To which extent this survival stems from "normal" work pressures or from the new work culture that has stemmed from institutional change is a theme that I will return to throughout this chapter.

Interestingly, in spite of the hardships and grievances experienced, only one of the research participants had left the museum, suggesting that there was something about museums that held them to their work. We shall see that loyalty is only half the reason for "sticking" with the museum, many of the research participants in fact felt "stuck"; they believed there were few alternative employment opportunities available to them.

6.2 *The Psychological Contract that Binds*

The research participants' were "invested" in the museum at an emotional and psychological level. They clearly had a passion for their work and a commitment to, or "belief" in the organisation; they had also invested their time and energy as well as their skills. Captured in the words of one public programmes manager:

I think that you have to believe in the job that you do and what the organisation stands for. I can't think at the moment of another organisation where I would have the same sense of personal investment or belief in it.

public programmes manager

What I am describing here is what management literature loosely terms as the "psychological contract." The psychological contract is an unwritten set of expectations between employees and the organisation (Rousseau 1995). For example the employee will work hard and meet their specific job expectations so long as they receive some benefits such as job security, remuneration and prospects for professional development and promotion in exchange for their skills. In turn, the organisation will reward the employee through monetary payment and provide benefits so long as the employee performs and meets company expectations.

Unlike a written contract, the psychological contrast is inferred, sometimes verbal, and thus open to multiple interpretations. The conditions of the psychological contract changes frequently yet is a significant determinant of behaviour in organisations. Management literature also specifies that the psychological contract is regularly broken (Rousseau 1995). Depending on the degree and types of breaks in the psychological contract, referred to as "breeches" and "violations," it can have a significant and lasting impact on employees (Rousseau 1995). Most relevant to this chapter is the perception and consequences of psychological contract breach on employees in an organisation that is undertaking "transformational change". In the section that follows I outline some of the factors that drew the research participants to the museum sector including the types of "entry portals" (DiMaggio 1988: 23) into the museum sector and how they in effect become "psychologically bound" to the museum. It is important to highlight at this stage that rather than assessing particular

models of the “psychological contract”, instead I focus on how the research participants describe the impact of organisational change on the value and status of their work.

6.2.1 *Cultivating a Passion*

I saw the taonga and it completely blew me away and I thought, ‘Shit, I’d like to work with those taonga.’

curator

In the sixth form I did art history and had a fantastic teacher who took us to the art gallery. I didn’t know galleries existed and my eyes were opened. Later I went to university and for some reason I seemed to connect with this idea of art history and just kept going.

educator/director

I’ve always been part of the museum world, since my childhood.

education manager

Love at first sight? Perhaps, but to transform the idea that museum work might be interesting into winning a position in a museum is difficult. A strong passion laced with determination can still lead to disappointment. The museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand is small, employing fewer than 2000 people. Figures in Chapter Three indicated a strong growth rate of jobs in the museum sector but this does not take into account the demand for such positions. For example those wishing to obtain museum employment and those already employed in museums believe that there are not many positions available, competition for these positions is increasing, and staff turnover is very low (Pattillo 1997: 39). Several women experienced extraordinary difficulty in obtaining their first museum job whilst a few found it relatively easy. Most of the research participants had tertiary qualifications⁴⁹, often to a master’s level, or

⁴⁹ In Evans’ 1992 study of women working in the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand, of the 125 respondents 62 per cent held Arts or Science Degrees, 26 per cent held Masters degrees, just over three per cent held Doctorates, and 17 per cent held teaching qualifications (p. 21). Evans’ findings are similar to 1996 census figures, which show that 73 percent of those in the occupational category

specialised training in their area of expertise, particularly for those working in conservation. Some had both. While some had obtained work relevant to their qualifications, others were “underemployed” in that they had accepted jobs for which they were over qualified in order to gain entry into the museum sector. Due to the tight labour market, once in a low-ranked position some of the research participants found it difficult to elevate their employment status to museum work more suited to their qualifications.

Not all research participants set out determined to obtain museum work because of their passion. Several women developed their passion after entering the profession, which in some instances they described as getting there by “accident.” Two curators recounted:

I got there quite by chance really. I had finished my Masters degree and [...] I was desperately searching for a job as I had this huge loan to pay off. I applied for two jobs and both were offered to me, I accepted the one that sounded more exciting which was the museum position.

curator

I really came into the museum profession by accident to be perfectly honest. I entered under a traineeship [...] it sounded interesting [...] and I have been here ever since.

curator

One entry point into the museum sector for a few of the research participants, primarily those who worked in collection management, conservation and curatorial areas, was through the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (MONZTPT) Traineeship Programme, or through similar programmes. With this Traineeship Programme, the trainees had the opportunity to work at either MONZTPT or another museum. These traineeship positions largely, but not solely, targeted training young Maori and Pacific Islanders in museological principles in order to undertake appropriate care, preservation and research of taonga Maori and objects from the

“curator” held post-secondary qualifications compared to 41 per cent of the total workforce (Ministry of Cultural Affairs & Statistics New Zealand 1998: 25).

Pacific (Pattillo 1997: 19). Unfortunately the MONZTPT traineeship programme is no longer available, but the Museums Studies Programme at Massey University is fostering the development of practical museum internships for their Diploma students.

Museums have also utilised other government sponsored employment schemes such as the PEP,⁵⁰ Task Force Green and more recently volunteer work for a community wage.⁵¹ The women who participated in government sponsored employment or training programmes commented that it gave them a taste for museum work, but no promise of a permanent position:

I got onto a Government PEP scheme and they gave me a job at a museum. I was working in the back rooms doing traditional museum stuff. I loved it, sorting out things, checking labels and catalogue numbers.

curator/manager

It was a three-year training position with no guarantee of a position at the end of it.

curator

In some instances the traineeship and employment schemes have been used as another type of buffer for the “non-replacement” employment policies that some museums have adopted:

Well they had a trainee-ship scheme for MONZ⁵² and they had all these grand plans that MONZ was going to take a forward view and train people up in the profession. The idea hit the dust pretty quickly because there weren't the funds to carry it out. I was in a trainee position, which I always thought was a hoot because no one was there training me. I was basically put in a position that I was not suited for and left there for two years; it was a staff position that they had not been allowed to fill. So they basically used the scheme to get staff.

curator

⁵⁰ Project Employment Programme.

⁵¹ Employment initiatives such as working for the Community Wage offer long-term unemployed people the opportunity to retrain and the museum has the benefit of subsidised short-term labour.

⁵² MONZ was the shortened term for the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (MONZTPT).

Museums rely heavily on volunteer labour,⁵³ a path many of the research participants took to gain entry into the sector (Pattillo 1997: 13) or what DiMaggio refers to as an “entry portal” (1988: 16). As non-profit making organisations, volunteer work is a useful method for museums to obtain staff without the burden of paying salaries. In Chapter Three I noted how women have long been involved in volunteer work in museums. As in other sectors of the economy, women’s volunteer work is unaccounted for yet contributes to economic growth (see Waring 1996: 47). Attempts have been made to elevate the status of volunteer work in museums in Aotearoa New Zealand such as National Services providing training seminars for volunteer staff, position descriptions being written and the establishment of volunteer labour contracts. Volunteers are also encouraged to further their skills by undertaking the Museum Studies programme through Massey University, Palmerston North and they also get a reduction in member fees to MAANZ. Nevertheless, the research participants who entered into volunteer work did so strategically; it helped them obtain experience and insight into museums, they could decide which area they were most interested in, and they could establish vital contacts. None of the research participants volunteered as “hobby work” – these women were usually studying at the same time and/or working part-time elsewhere.

Whilst undertaking volunteer work, for most “luck” and “timing” enabled them to get their foot in the door of paid museum work:

I did the voluntary thing for a wee while and then was offered a job. I was incredibly lucky in that I had a job that related specifically to my Degree. I don't think many people have that luxury actually [...]. I also think that a lot had to do with timing, the time I approached the organisation.

public programmes manager

⁵³ It is usual for the smaller museums to rely more heavily on volunteer labour than larger museums. For example, Donnelly’s 1996 report on the museum sector notes, “the ratio of volunteers to fulltime equivalent staff was inversely related to the size of museums [...]. In 1995/96 small museums recorded 16.6 volunteers per one fulltime equivalent staff member. For medium museums the ratio was 2.5 while for large museums the proportion was only 0.64” (Donnelly 1996: 13).

I started out as a volunteer and didn't expect to get work straight away because that seemed like a pretty impossible task, but managed to get work straight away that wasn't in a volunteer capacity. It was quite a lucky break actually.

information services

Interestingly, one of the volunteer women felt that she started off well, quickly moving from volunteer work to short-term paid contracts, then onto part-time work, yet it took her five years to obtain a permanent full-time position, and it was not in her preferred area which was curatorial work. She lamented the loss of the training programmes offered for curators.

All of the research participants were aware that the job market was narrow and competitive; Pattillo's survey of the museum sector reflects their sentiments, noting that sector growth in the early 1990s was small (1997: 13). Although I argued in Chapter Three that between the years 1966 – 1996 the museum sector experienced significant growth, the demand for museum work outweighs the supply. Later we shall see how the competitive work environment which stemmed from the radical economic restructuring programme between 1984 – 1999 has created a sense of vulnerability for some museum employees. Perceiving the scarcity of museum jobs they are choosing to remain in their current positions for two reasons. First, they fear that they will be unable to find a better position in another museum and second, "underemployment" was becoming a regular feature in the museum sector.

For example, at the time of interviewing, two of the research participants, an information assistant and an assistant curator, described themselves as holding junior level positions and were actively seeking a better position in the museum sector. These women were both overqualified for their current positions. Similar to those women undertaking volunteer work they were economically depriving themselves in the hope that they would at some stage obtain employment that matched their qualifications. Problems remain in that if underemployment becomes more widespread and increases in the ratio of women employed in the museum sector

continue, the museum will become ghettoised with clusters of highly qualified, under-utilised women in the lower strata of the museum. In turn, while the research participants were using their qualifications to obtain leverage to obtain employment in the museum it appears that “queuing” still operates where factors such as class, race and gender assists with an individuals entry into the middle to upper strata of museum work. One research participant commented that it was sometimes difficult to hear about positions coming up; she felt that a lot of the positions were “word of mouth” and other staff members “waiting in the ranks” often filled these positions:

I am desperate to move on, but it is so hard to find a job, they are rarely advertised. I have applied for jobs and have heard that someone within the institution has been passed up through the ranks to take the position. A lot of it is who you know and networking, and many places don't have the money to advertise, so it is pretty hard to hear of things that are coming up.

information services

Networking and contacts was another way of people finding museum work. Being in the “right place at the right time” seemed to help to some extent. Yet, with museum directors tending towards employing outsiders, as noted in Chapter Five, knowing people appears not to have the same currency as it once did. Further, if people left they were not always replaced, adding to the dearth of museum jobs. The information assistant explained:

The job market is very, very tight. It does seem to be a case of networking, or just being in the right place at the right time [...]. In the area that I am really interested in, every time a staff member has left, they have not been replaced [...]. There is no growth in the curatorial area. People say ‘this is coming up’ or ‘what about that’ but it is front-of-house work or it is admin work, things that I don't want to do, that I am not interested in and so it seems like moving sideways or backwards.

information services

This research participant felt that the curatorial area *per se* was not a growth area compared to front-of-house, or customer service roles, and management. Interestingly Pattillo's (1997: 25) study on training needs for the museum sector identified customer service, marketing and management, as priority areas, particularly for the

medium to large museums that employ professional museum staff.⁵⁴ The prioritisation of marketing and customer services certainly fits with the growth of service-orientated roles in feminising occupations (Adkins 1995). At the same time, a factor that emerged from Chapter Five and is worthy of consideration here concerns the devaluation in the status of the curatorial role, as commented by one curator:

Curators are really in limbo at the moment. We have really been looked down on: there have been various assumptions made about us as being autocratic, being stuck in the past, inflexible, unimaginative, that sort of thing.

curator

DiMaggio's (1988: 21) survey of arts managers in the US, although earlier than the parameters of my study and not focused on radical organisational transformation, is particularly useful in how he conveys the career path for museum workers in the US. First he noted that the curator position was once considered an important prerequisite to becoming a museum director, but this factor was becoming less influential (DiMaggio 1988: 21). Second, like the research participants involved in my study, people enter the museum sector from multiple entry portals (DiMaggio 1988: 23). Third, career paths in the museum sector are "relatively unroutinized and idiosyncratic" (DiMaggio 1988: 22). Primarily because of the small size of both the museum sector and museums as organisations, few museums can routinely promote all competent staff (DiMaggio 1988: 23).

What was strongly evident from the research participants' conversations was that they said that satisfaction was obtained from the intrinsic worth of their work rather than the remuneration or opportunities for career development *per se*. In other words, a certain kind of psychological bind held them to museums. However also evident in the interview conversations was that whichever route the research participants entered the museum sector by, most entered at an entry-level position with low pay and most felt very quickly that they were under-employed according to their level of

⁵⁴ See also National Services (1999) *National Training Framework for Museums: Te Anga Kaiako a Iwi mo Nga Whare Taonga o Te Motu*.

qualifications. As noted, a significant number of the research participants held postgraduate qualifications. The research participants all felt there was a limit to how long they could sustain the “dissatisfaction” of holding a junior level position. Several of the research participants spoke of their ambition to move into more challenging and senior level work. Due to the organisational transformation, which one curator described as the “new era,” some of the research participants were able to move into positions with more responsibility, particularly through the increase of project work creating a need for middle managers to follow the project through:

I started off in really junior position; it was really low paid, while there were some great things about it there were also some really horrendous things too – particularly the low salary, and working weekends and public holidays. [...] I kind of stuck at it because I saw that there were incredible opportunities coming up, I knew what I wanted and was quite focused.

public programmes manager

I was very much a technician, and you were very subservient to the curators. It was really hard going because you just do what the curators tell you to do. Slowly I got the chance to try other stuff, the museum was installing a major exhibition and I just leapt at it. Then the new era started and the opportunities started to happen.

curator/manager

Because the research participants self-identified as mid-career they were interested in developing their career path further. However due to their psychological bind to museums and museum work they often sought intrinsic rewards for their work if promotional opportunities were few and far between. Later in this chapter I explore some of the paradoxes surrounding the research participants’ passion for their work and museums in relation to shifts in the work culture stemming from the introduction of the new management model. First I wish to explore which aspects of museums and museum work the research participants were committed to.

6.2.2 *Committed Care-Takers*

As noted earlier, relational aspects of the psychological contract lie between the individual and the organisation and are based on emotional factors such as loyalty,

commitment and trust (Brooks & Harfield 2000). The research participants' commitment stemmed from a combination of caring for museum objects and catering for the public. How they lived out their commitment was described in various ways, but included emotive words such as "devotion" and "passion." In the words of an information assistant and an exhibition design manager:

I am pretty devoted to the New Zealand art scene.

information services

I guess for me I am very passionate about what I do. It comes through in so much of what I do, if I didn't have that I think I wouldn't have the drive factor.

exhibition design manager

Even though the research participants may have entered the museum sector from a variety of avenues, once there they found museums "interesting" places to work. Associated with this initial appeal was a belief in the idea of service to the public. Most of the research participants, and not just those who were educators, spoke of "connecting" with the public and "sharing their passion." For example, a curator, who was also a trained teacher, described how she enjoyed creating exhibitions and working with ideas. She also believed that ideas needed to filter through to the audience. For her, undertaking research appealed to her curiosity, "discovering stuff" and "pushing and pulling ideas around," but it also needed to communicate a message to the public:

I like the creativity side of it, I like thinking of a concept and kind of pushing it and pulling it into something, but I also like the flow-on effects [...] it could be my teaching background coming in, but it's not enough for me to put on a show, it needs to have that educational focus.

curator

The research participants also described their attachment or commitment to the museum collections. Especially in the case of Taonga Maori a deep care-taking

responsibility, similar to that of a guardian, or Kaitiaki⁵⁵, was felt. Two educators talked about their strong connection with and passion for the museum collections and ideas and how they wished to pass this onto the children who visited the museum:

First of all, physically I just love being in this place. It's not just the teaching for me, it's the collections – I love the collections particularly the Maori and ethnic collections. I am an historian by background and for me if it were not for the collections I wouldn't be here. They are like the heart and soul of why I am here [...]. Because I feel so passionate about the collections, passionate about this place, I want that passion to go out to the schools and into that area that I work in. I am just trying to pass that passion on. If you can get onto a child who suddenly gets a sparkle in their eye about something in the museum I feel like, 'Yes, you've got it!'

education manager

The reason why I ended up working in a museum was that I have my passion and interest in the arts and I wanted to help people enjoy art as much as I did.

public programmes manager

Many of the research participants were captivated by the museum's "ambience," some spoke of the importance of information and "service" through "engaging with the museum public" to make their visit a "more meaningful experience." Others spoke of the importance of using the stories attached to the museum objects in the exhibition space. These stories not only bring life to the museum object but also provide an enriched museum experience for the visitor:

There's that certain feeling you get when walking through the galleries.

education manager

I prefer to use objects that are special, hold meaning to the location or period that we are representing in the exhibition, otherwise you lose the "wow factor" which is so important for museums.

curator

⁵⁵ The role of Kaitiaki in the museum context is not restricted to caring for taonga; it extends to liaison between the museum, its staff and the local iwi and Maori community.

Personally I believe that unless people can really talk to somebody else about what they have seen then that is half the museum experience gone [...]. Often it only involves eye contact with the visitor and the moment you catch their eye you've got two choices, either you drop your eyes again or you go over and make further contact. [...] When you talk to them they get involved in the museum experience in a very, very real way.

information services manager

Educators, interpreters, exhibition designers, and curators are all involved in bringing the collections to the public. They all bring their specialised knowledge and expertise to create the message presented to the visiting public. In fact, working with the public gave all of the research participants their greatest sense of satisfaction, validation or reward. This included the public's response to and engagement with museum objects, exhibitions and public programmes. The public helped the museum come to life, in the words of a marketing manager and a curator respectively:

It's when I go out onto the floor and I see people, you know, laughing and running around, kids being really noisy, and just the diversity of the people coming through the door. That's what makes me feel good about working here.

marketing manager

One of the memories that sticks in my mind was the absolute surprise and amazement of the women when they saw these objects from their [community]. They were just absolutely surprised. Gob smacked. It is those emotions that I find quite rewarding.

curator

Of the 17 research participants, three were curators and they all spoke of their desire to communicate a message to the public through the museum objects. Messages about the collections are communicated through a variety of media including exhibitions, information labels, exhibition catalogues, the education and public programmes, and more recently websites. This required research skills as well as creative and innovative thought. These three curators also spoke of operating on a "gut" or "intuitive" level to convey the "power," or "wairua"⁵⁶ of the objects. This is

⁵⁶ Life spirit.

what they enjoyed most about working in museums and this is what they felt was almost impossible to transfer into the work ethos of the new management model, as discussed in Chapters One and Five, of result-based outputs produced within set timeframes:

Curators need to have the ability to work with people, to talk with people and listen, and have very specialised knowledge. They also need to be good at making simple – not generalised, not simplified – and easily understandable information [...] so that people can easily get the point.

curator

It was magic, [...] it was as if] the wairua had spoken to me if you want the “nanoo nanoo” bits. But for me it was a little different, it was about piecing together a long research project and making really good connections [...]. I knew there was an academic side of me testing, testing how we can get Maori kids into the museum.

curator

I like the idea of creating an experience for people [...] to me it has always been about creative self-expression so it is a little more indulgent than just a work ethic. I tend to approach so much of it on a gut level, I only intellectualise it later on.

curator

Interestingly these three curators commented on having particular difficulty incorporating certain aspects of the new management model, such as tight deadlines and restricted budgets into their daily work practice. Sometimes the method of teamwork and the requirement for flexibility was also problematic. Some of the research participants noted that since the introduction of the new management model and the transformation of the work culture that followed specific components of their work had declined. As breaches in the research participants’ psychological contracts began to emerge so too did their commitment to the museum erode. Many of the research participants gave the impression of survival, working long hours and with a strong sense that the museum, or their director, did not value their work. While it appears that most of the women have “chosen” to stay working at the museum, we shall also see later in this chapter that perhaps the research participants were in fact

“stuck” at the museum. With few alternative employment options outside of the museum sector has added further to the overwhelming sense of “survival.”

6.3 *Surviving Pressure*

You have to believe that what you do is worthwhile otherwise it'd drive you nuts.

public programmes manager

It's an absolute madhouse; I don't know how we coped.

curator

Any form of organisational change is difficult for individuals and for the organisation as a whole. The book *Institutional Trauma* edited by Heumann Gurian (1995: 17, 19) explores how major organisational change causes “discomfort,” “trauma,” and affects “staff in profound ways.” Heumann Gurian (1995: 19) argues that through sharing stories about organisational change, institutions and their managers can learn about how to enact change and minimise “trauma” for the organisation as a whole and the individuals involved. The experience of change in Aotearoa New Zealand museums differs from Heumann Gurian’s North American museums. Indeed museums in Aotearoa New Zealand have a shorter collective history than museums in the US and, so too, a shorter historical experience of organisational change. However, rather than focusing on generic organisational change my focus is on organisational transformation, which entails a radical shift in work culture (Halford & Leonard 2001: 89-92). Of specific concern is the way in which the shift in work culture has for the research participants involved a perceptible decline in work conditions. In the words of a public programmes manager when describing her workload during a major project:

I was under an incredible amount of pressure; being pushed to give more than what you can give is really difficult.

public programmes manager

In Chapter Five I noted that in the process of becoming corporate increasing numbers of museums undertook project work. Project work not only revamped the museum, providing new facilities, it also signalled the emergence of a new work culture under the ethos of the new management model. Museums adopted a business practice to ensure projects were completed on time and within budget as well as ensuring that all future museum operations and services would be carried out just as efficiently. In turn, all the research participants commented that their workloads had increased phenomenally. One curator commented:

It was horrific, really stressful; you know the workload that I put up with. The problem is that when you think that something is a really neat idea, what you don't think about is what it involves. You kind of commit yourself to deadlines based on enthusiasm and all of that without thinking it through logically [...]. The downside of big projects is that it can be a shit process for everybody. By the time the project was finished we had all had a guts full of it and have to ask, "was it worth it?" People were pushed professionally and personally, it put everybody on the line right through from management down to the attendants; you can only stretch yourself to that level for a short period of time.

curator

Whilst several of the research participants spoke of opportunities to advance their career through project work, many spoke of a lack of institutional support and a dearth of training programmes to ease the transition into positions with higher levels of responsibility. Halford & Leonard (2001: 90) write that in these new flexible work cultures members of staff are often encouraged to "empower themselves" by taking on more responsibility, yet the rhetoric of empowerment is often not met with adequate institutional training and support. One research participant, who after seven years of work experience in the museum sector had moved from volunteer work to a junior-level position and then onto management, commented:

I don't think they have invested anything significantly in me actually. I think my development had been because I have been put in situations where I have hit the ground running. I have had no professional development whatsoever to get me to where I am now. It was just like, "there you go. Go for it."

There was also a strong sense conveyed by the research participants that museums counted on a high level of staff commitment, “goodwill,” and personal investment in two ways. First, staff were customarily asked to employ their skills, without any extra remuneration, for work that did not directly relate to their position responsibilities. For example, three of the research participants, all of whom were Maori, commented that they had “extra,” and unpaid, responsibilities placed on them in the role of Kaitiaki. These women were committed to the Kaitiaki role but had doubts about the museum’s attitude towards biculturalism. They felt that the Kaitiaki role was thrust upon them at the director’s whim, the role was not a formal part of their job description, and they were expected to undertake Kaitiaki duties outside of work time. Because their motivation for working in the museum was often attached to their commitment to the taonga and tikanga⁵⁷ Maori, they continued to fulfil the Kaitiaki role but placed various limitations on what the role would entail:

We are expected to play the role of Kaitiaki because of our background rather than our actual job and we are expected to do it in our tea break. This is on top of the fact that we get constantly used to do things that aren’t part of our job descriptions, we get dragged into projects and [...] in the end you feel exploited. [The] Kaitiaki work feels like tokenism.

museum professional with additional Kaitiaki role

I pretty much feel like a doormat at the moment.

museum professional with additional Kaitiaki role

This sense that Maori staff are exploited is a concern known to the museum sector and has been raised by O’Regan (1997), Pattillo (1997) and Murphy (1999). Pattillo (1997: 2) writes:

The pattern of participation for Maori in the sector is typical for minorities in organisations. Individuals become “trapped” in advisory and/or representative roles without significant decision influence on operational issues.

⁵⁷ Rules and protocol.

Certainly, the research participants who performed the informal Kaitiaki role for their museum felt that their knowledge and skills were used to suit management.

Second, the “excitement” staff felt by being involved in project work was also accompanied by a decline in work conditions. The research participants from all areas of the museum described project work in a mixed fashion; it was both “challenging” but also “hard work,” which included working “really long hours.” Many felt that they were only “just surviving.” Following are comments made by three managers; an education manager, a public programmes manager and a marketing manager:

Survival. You had to do it, you couldn't find anybody else to do it so you had to step in and do it.

education manager

Every minute of the day counted.

public programmes manager

I worked really long hours, just heaps.

marketing manager

Halford & Leonard (2001: 86) argue that when organisations undergo a radical transformation it calls for a new breed of management; a strata of middle managers who will inspire and manage the organisational change process (Brooks & Harfield 2000: 1). On the one hand doors have been opened to women to take on the challenge particularly in organisations that value “feminine” skills such as listening to staff and customers. However these changes may have been made on a rhetorical level only due to evidence that the work culture *per se* still favours the traditional masculine work culture. Bradley (2000) notes that one of the myths of the contemporary work cultures is that all staff can excel and advance if they work hard and work long hours, however by assuming equality of opportunity in fact denies differences based on gender, race, class and even domestic care taking responsibilities. For example, the research participants who had children spoke of temporarily delegating family

commitments to other family members in order to achieve the tight timeframes set by project work:

It was a really stressful time for me; I was just lucky I had someone to look after my kids [...] and I could just devote myself to my work.

curator

I found that I was working at home late at night, which meant I couldn't see my family. When the project finished, I withdrew to part time. I have only recently returned to a full-time schedule and that upset my son. It took my son a while to realise that mum was actually going to come home at 5:00pm or 5:30pm, she was not going to come home at 10:30pm and sit in front of the computer until 2:00am and then leave at 7:30am the next day.

education manager

6.3.1 Rupture Points

The process of undertaking project work was described as very intense, routines were disrupted and, at times, staff turnover has been high as indicated by the case of the Otago Museum in Chapter Three. In some museums with budget cutbacks staff have not been replaced if they have left, thus increasing already full workloads, contributing to the sense of a decline in work conditions. An exhibition design manager observed:

Our museum is so short-staffed; you are really pushed to get things done.

exhibition design manager

Obtaining new positions that require new skills, with a lack of institutional support, appears to be a recurring theme for the research participants who had obtained promotion to middle management positions. They approached the challenge in various ways; some were curious while others felt that they had to “prove” themselves fit for the task. In the words of a conservator, a marketing manager and an education manager respectively:

I liked the idea of the challenge that the project offered.

conservator

You have got to prove yourself and that has characterised my work. You have to be really thorough.

marketing manager

I feel like I had to prove myself, I was under real pressure not to let the project fail.

education manager

All of the research participants had different responses to how and if they felt pressured by the new work environment. For most, the intensity of the high workloads, long hours and the need to prove their ability comprise some of the factors that contribute to this strong sense of “survival.” This may also point to specific gendered factors such as while certain work tasks have feminised the work culture has not, this point I will explore more fully in the next chapter.

A common factor, which the research participants believed was indicative of a decline in work conditions, was continuing high levels of stress; on one occasion a marketing manager thought:

‘God I need therapy!’

marketing manager

These words were spoken during the interview with much laughter. However, a quarter of the 17 research participants, from all areas of the museum, brought up the topic of therapy in a much more serious manner. Therapy was used as a means to gain perspective on the problems they were having at work, as observed by an exhibition design manager who perceive the fault to be within herself rather than the museum’s work culture:

I have had a good look at myself; I’ve been very critical of myself and found that I had lost a lot of confidence to be quite honest. I have ended up going to therapy.

exhibition design manager

Four research participants from different areas of the museum spoke of how work pressures had a severe impact on their emotional well-being. At times work pressures stemmed from normal office politics, such as one curator who spoke of having a problem with “difficult” colleagues. While others, like the exhibition design manager quoted above, ended up lacking confidence in her ability to do her work because of continual work pressures. Of these four women, one said she had a nervous breakdown, two felt that they had been pushed to the edge; another said she was “depressed.” Two were taking anti-depressants, two were continuing with therapy. One decided to leave her job due to severe depression:

I have to say that at the end of last year I ended up having a nervous breakdown, not just because of work but because of family pressures as well.

education manager

Anti-depressants have really helped keep me afloat; I just would have had a breakdown I think otherwise.

curator

I can tell you that I was really burnt out by Christmas. It was really hectic, looking back I should have probably left the challenge and walked on because I don't think it's been very good for my mind or my stability.

exhibition design manager

I read a pamphlet that my partner had left 'lying about' in our house and I realised that I exhibited quite a lot of signs of depression, which is one of the symptoms of burnout. I reassessed myself three months later and realised that I had to leave.

curator

Although each of the four research participants' experiences differed, they frequently used the term “burn-out.” Significantly, work-related stress stemming from the impact of radical organisational transformation played a large role in all the research participants' work experiences and was visible in many forms, from general feelings of frustration to, as we will see later, outbursts of anger or tears. Because organisational change often was instigated at the same time as an extensive refurbishment project, which took place over a long period of time, so too was stress

experienced for long periods. The strain from constant stress not only eroded work conditions, it also began to impinge upon the research participants' emotional and/or physical well-being and their ability to enjoy their work. Two women made the following comments in relation to their respective museum's long-term refurbishment projects:

Most days there's just so much going on and you think, 'arghhh!'

curator

I think a lot of people are reaching the point where they've just sort of had it; we're all quite worn down by it.

information services manager

While ill health was the most common physical symptom of stress, several of the research participants' spoke of reaching a "crisis point," feeling suddenly emotionally drained because of stress. For some, "controlled" crying provided an avenue for release. Because maintaining a sense of professionalism was important, these women chose when or how to cry, such as the privacy of the home for a curator, or the staff toilets for an information services manager:

Sometimes I just go home and cry, it's those times that I seriously wonder what am I doing here and whether it is really worth it.

curator

You hear of people crying, breaking down and all that sort stuff. I guess it is just a personal thing whether you feel that it is professional or not, and if you are personally going to subscribe to that. I mean I've been put in lots of positions where I have had to have a really good howl but I have done it in the loo. Then you come back, take a deep breath and say 'okay let's get on with it.'

information services manager

6.4 Collegial Breakdown

So far I have discussed factors that indicate a decline in work conditions for individual museum professionals however change has also greatly affected staff

relations. For example, with the intensity of working closely with colleagues for long hours to meet deadlines, people became familiar with how their colleagues react under pressure:

I think there are perceptions about this place, it is not incestuous but it comes pretty close in the sense that we work together so closely and so intensely. If someone sets deadlines it brings you together emotionally. When deadlines are tight you tend to know how people are going to behave, know their personalities really well. Some are known for the temper tantrums and tears.

information services manager

Many of the research participants from all areas of the museum drew from the familial model when describing their relations with their staff. In each case, “family” had different connotations. For those who worked in the smaller to medium-size museums in the regions “family” was used fairly positively:

It's a strange world to be in because we are so isolated here so you stick together and you talk work and you socialise work, so it is really a very, very, cliquey group I think [...]. Sort of like a family.

education manager

As with most family groups there are moments of harmony and conflict. Of particular interest is how a decline in work conditions for the research participants may have lead to the loss of opportunity to care about their work, the museum or their colleagues. Even though the practice of teamwork is advocated under the new management model, if one is feeling undervalued, overworked and stressed not only has the psychological contract been broken between the individual and the organisation but so too has the level of respect between colleagues altered.

Two women, an information assistant and a curator, who worked in larger museums that had recently undergone transformation, drew from the family analogy to highlight the “dysfunctional” component of staff relationships. The information assistant lamented the loss of the “family feeling” and the curator spoke of “bad relationships”:

I know it sounds trite but I mean it was really like a family atmosphere, people helped you [...]. Then the organisation grew so dramatically [and] you don't have the same closeness of relationships.

information services

It is a very sort of dysfunctional institution and there is a lot of bullshit like that, that you have to negotiate, so it is not so very different from my dysfunctional family! One of my colleagues caused a lot of trouble for me and it has always been hard to know why and in the end I went to the EAP⁵⁸ and the clinical psychologist got me to see that he was a misogynist. It took me quite a while to see that our relationship was like a bad marriage because we were quite close and he was manipulating me in really horrible ways and getting me to do things for his convenience. So there are relationships like that throughout the museum and because it is such a small world you do get close to people.

anon

One curator, whose relations with her director during project work had reached “breaking point,” spoke of her anger-filled “outburst”:

The director and I had this humungous blow out, I lost it and said to him, “you can stick your fucking museum up your arse” and shut the door and walked out of his office. But he called me back and made me apologise [...].

curator

This curator knew that her behaviour was inappropriate, yet the pressure of project work combined with differences in opinion led to this moment. Interestingly after the event she recounted how her working relationship with the director improved; although their inter-personal relationship was somewhat distanced and “cool,” they were able to refocus their energies to ensure the project was completed rather than focusing on their differences in opinion which was counterproductive.

⁵⁸ Employment Assistance Programme provided by the museum employee's trade union.

One manager suggested that disagreements between staff or “dysfunctional” behaviour stemmed from a combination of both the intensity of museum work, requiring museum staff to work closely together during the change process, and the idea that museum work tended to attract people with an “arty personality” and temperament to suit:

You hear about the arguments and rows that happen in museums. Maybe it is because they are creative, artistic people [...] they are perfectionists [...] so it tends to be more emotional than other places. It is a strange environment.

information services manager

It appears that a certain degree of fighting or dysfunctional behaviour is “acceptable” in the museum if it can be qualified as part of the museum personality, “eccentric”, “arty” and “charismatic.” One of the most difficult problems for this manager, aside from the long hours, stress related illness, tight deadlines and restricted budgets, was “managing” these artistic types, which often led to conflict:

Conflict with staff is awful [...]. You have to make peace with all these fractious personalities.

public programmes manager

Conflict with staff appeared to be to a major source of difficulty for many of the research participants in the new work environment. As stated in Chapter Five, teamwork had become a common method of work practice in museums and thus the skill to negotiate through conflicts with a group of people with strong ideas was crucial, particularly for those in team leader and management positions. I also noted in Chapter Five how some of the research participants felt that the skill to manage staff in general and conflict situations in particular was lacking in the museum sector. Some of the research participants went into detail about the difficulties they experienced with the teamwork process. For example, one curator commented that she expected differences in opinion, but the lack of skill in managing these differences and the lack of clear guidelines of team member roles made it difficult for decisions to be negotiated without some detrimental effect on individuals. Another woman, an exhibition design manager, spoke of the need to “take a stand” in meetings about

decisions that would detrimentally affect her team; unrealistic time frames were common battles. This manager also commented that she was open to negotiate a solution to any problems raised in management meetings but in the process she frequently felt “walked over.” Important to both these women was being healthy enough to cope with these difficult circumstances and ambiguous work roles:

It sounds really awful when you think about it, well I always thought of it as such a luxury job. It's not like we're saving lives or there are great physical risks but you are getting in a lot of wars, and that is fine. I actually enjoy that a lot of the time unless I am tired. It's the individuals you are dealing with a lot of the time, it is so complicated, and it is all so vague; professional practice isn't very clear anymore.

curator

My role is to act as a barrier [for] my team. I have had run-ins just based on the tasks and workloads my team and I are expected to work towards. Quite often I think, “which hat shall I put on today, is it the frustration one, is it the manager one, is it the emotive, or whatever.” [When] I go into meeting and I have to push ideas, a different hat goes on again, it is a different voice, a different tone almost, like “I can't accept this.” But, maybe I sound still too accommodating and I just get washed over again and again. I find that I've been dumped with something that I have to solve; no one is actually working as a team to help solve the problem.

exhibition design manager

Finding an avenue to release the symptoms of stress was important for all of the research participants, but the routes they took differed. Those who did speak of “burning out”, or reaching near “breaking point”, conveyed the experience through a narrative based around self-understanding and self-exploration. Attempts were made to recognise qualities within themselves that may have contributed to their situation. Examples include “masking” their feelings, “internalising” stress, and recognising a lack of “clear boundaries” between themselves and others:

One of my bad points is that I actually don't like admitting, especially to my director, that I was actually struggling. I just battle on and try and fob things off. I'd feel shattered, but as soon as I walked into the door I would put my smile back on and try and be bubbly and happy and get through the work

and then walk back through the door feeling shattered again. Only because I didn't want to show that I was not part of this corporate image, or that I could not handle it – when really it was incredibly stressful.

education manager

I internalise it, I am aware of that.

curator

A problem for me is that I find it very hard to establish boundaries between other people and me. So I am kind of a jellyfish that way and sympathising with people means that I don't really sort of stand apart and look at what is happening.

curator

In contrast, two of the research participants, both managers, found an opportunity with work colleagues “to get it out.” Either in the form of weekly meetings at work or informally after work, they were able drop their professional image and safely share confidences with their colleagues. The process served a “cathartic” role:

At the end of the year you are just so buggered and some really crazy decisions are being made and you just think, “Oh my god, what is going on.” You've just got to let it all go. Our manager would get his staff over, we are all sort of the same level in the organisation, and we have a bottle of cheap bubbly and you just have a go, nothing is sacred, all the gossip, it's a real “us and them” thing, you have your favourite targets, it's terrible but you have just got to do it.

middle manager

My manager, he was just so supportive, he used to have this meeting once a week with the staff he managed and it would just degenerate into just a big moan session but it was really cathartic because everybody was moaning about the same dysfunctional people in the office. He didn't proffer any solutions it was just a forum for “getting it out.”

middle manager

Others utilised strategic “support networks” throughout the museum or the museum sector. This form of network took a long time to build and required a lot of trust. In the words of a manager and a curator:

I would talk to people that I admired in the organisation and just talk about what my problems were. You quickly find out who are good to talk to and who to take advice from.

public programmes manager

It has taken me a long time to sort out who is actually reliable and there are so many politics.. Actually identifying people who is going to remain the same in spite of the changes is difficult [...] there are very, very few people like that, most of whom have left, but there are still one or two that I talk to.

curator

Unfortunately, the network structure, which is developed carefully and slowly, was weakening for some of the research participants, particularly curators. Various reasons have contributed to the corrosion of the informal collegial support network. For example, people are over-burdened with their workloads and do not have the time to exchange information and support. Further, with the influx of newcomers on short-term contracts for the duration of a project, maintaining new support networks has been difficult. One curator lamented the loss of the sector's network structure and felt strongly that people in the profession were "suffering from isolation and fragmentation" because of the shift in work culture which focused on marketing the museum's competitive advantage over other museums rather than sharing information as they had done in the past. Another curator spoke of how the staff tearoom literally disappeared, albeit temporarily, during the museum's extensive refurbishment project. When the tearoom disappeared so too did regular opportunities for informal networking:

People are so busy, they don't get the time or space to think or share their information. I think the loss of Liaison Services⁵⁹ is a big part of that. At the

⁵⁹ The Museum's Liaison Services was established in 1979 and four Liaison Officers were based in the Auckland War Memorial Museum, the Canterbury Museum in Christchurch, the Otago Museum in Dunedin, and the National Museum in Wellington. Funded by Lotteries Grants, Internal Affairs, Liaison Services provided support, training and advice to staff working in the smaller regional museums. In line with processes of economic restructuring, the cost of delivering one-to-one or tailored consultancy service were considered high and methods to assess the level of benefit in terms of this service towards increasing competency and productivity in the sector was difficult (see Pattillo

annual museum conference, you'd hope there would be somebody standing up there, talking about new developments, not about sector marketing and branding. We want to hear about what people are doing in their projects and that day-to-day stuff; we could benefit hugely from conversations and sharing.

curator/manager

It was amazing, they got rid of our tearoom and suddenly [...] it was almost like we became so isolated and separated into our individual departments. It just became crystal clear about what exactly went on in the tearoom, you know it was a gathering place, you just talked about various things, what you did, what you were up to, what stages you were at.

curator

A support network was vital to all the research participants as it reinforced their sense that producing quality museum work was still valued, a factor that despite their passion and commitment to museums appeared to be tenuous under the value-for-money framework of the new management model. Unfortunately, as the balance of power within the museum has shifted the traditional boundaries of collegial support have broken down.

6.5 *Committed or Stuck?*

Only two research participants, both managers, claimed that they felt valued within their organisation. One public programmes manager felt valued because of the way the museum public enjoyed and participated in what she and her team had worked towards. She also felt valued because her senior manager was enormously respected within the organisation and this trickled down throughout the department. The other manager, an outsider, although she currently felt valued, knew it was contingent:

I do really [feel valued]. A lot of it is because you can see the results of what you do, you see people enjoying and participating in the things that you do, that's the visitors. Also, because I have a manager who knows the

1997: 20-21). Around 1994 the Liaison Officer positions were disbanded in each of the regions and in turn National Services of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa was established as a central advisory and support agency.

business really well and has an enormous amount of respect from our CEO and directors.

middle manager

Sometimes you're really valued and other times you're sort of swept aside because a political relationship is considered more important, which is pretty crappy I think. But, the more you realise that those political networks are more powerful than anything else it is like a healthy dose of reality.

middle manager

The majority of the research participants, especially curators, did not feel valued. Throughout the interview conversations, value was portrayed variously but discussed in relation to how project work had radically transformed the museum's work culture. Some described how they had no avenue in which to "voice their concerns," lacked decision-making power, experienced a loss of autonomy and felt undervalued because they received little recognition for their hard work by management and, significantly, the director. Curators and assistant curators uttered the following comments:

There just isn't an avenue to really voice any concern, we're continually batted back and forth between the Project Office and the Collection Manager.

curator

It is difficult to feel empowered; we are powerless almost. No consultation from management about how we will perform, what tasks we will perform – I don't even have the words to describe this sort of behaviour.

curator

If there were screw-ups I was the one who had to go in and fix it and for no credit, no acknowledgment and I couldn't move up the structure.

curator

We get constantly used to do things that aren't part of our jobs and then aren't thanked for it.

technician/assistant curator

A couple of the research participants commented that there was the expectation from directors to "fit in" with the performance expectations of the new work culture and

invariably the new direction of the museum, or as described by one curator, “to sell out:”

Our director has a very strong idea of what he is doing and where he is going. The rest of us just fit in or shut up or something.

curator

You know the story; if you can't stand the heat get out of the kitchen.

information services manager

Our director's approach was making things happen by basically clubbing people over the head and making rules until they are scared shitless so it happens. It is hard to keep creating and keep going in an environment like that [...]. There was a feeling that those in my department who didn't sell-out basically got thrown out.

curator

A significant portion of the research participants, primarily those not in management positions, felt overwhelmingly that management did not value their work. As noted in the sections above, due to organisational change and working under the new work culture, most of the research participants had experienced symptoms of stress and overwork, and some were undertaking therapy. Yet, at the time of interviewing, all but one of the research participants remained working in museums. The one woman who had left re-entered the museum sector six months before the interview on a short term contract. To some extent the research participants were able to look on the “positive side” and found avenues in their daily toil at the museum to obtain a sense of satisfaction. Many described how the museum, particularly during the process of undertaking project work, was still an “exciting place to work,” as described by a marketing manager and an education manager:

Being involved in the project like that was just exciting; you were with lots of people who were so exhilarated by that kind of experience.

marketing manager

I believed in what I was involved in, it was sort of overwhelming but it was also quite exciting.

public programmes manager

However, with increased workloads and pressures to meet project deadlines becoming all too common in the new work environment, several of the research participants from all areas of the museum, particularly the curatorial area, spoke of feeling “used,” “exploited” or treated like “doormats.” Satisfaction was becoming increasingly difficult to find and the less positive aspects of their work less easy to overlook. One curator had recently left a museum to work in another, and several others who also worked in curatorial departments were in the process of seeking museum work elsewhere:

I felt that I was taken for granted and that was a major turning point.

curator

As noted earlier, one of the contradictions is that although some of the research participants had become dissatisfied with their work or a particular museum, they claimed to remain committed to museums overall; I will return to this point later in this chapter. For example, two research participants noted how their dissatisfaction stemmed from the fact that they had “outgrown” their junior-level positions and this in turn impacted on their work performance. Of these two women one felt that she was not operating to her full potential and the other knew that although her enthusiasm had dwindled she hoped to find a better museum position soon:

I am probably only giving about 80 percent at the moment, rather than 100 percent, which I prefer to be doing [...]. I like to be completely passionate about it and I can work really hard. Here I am doing the work but I am not focused.

technician/assistant curator

There is definitely a passion but it sort of dwindles. Ironically whilst I sometimes feel a bit frustrated at my workplace and I am desperate to move on I still have a commitment to the arts. [At the moment] I just think, “take the pay packet and keep going.”

information services

Closely connected to feelings of dissatisfaction was the level of pay. One curatorial assistant who held a Masters Degree commented that she was paid less than the

cleaning staff. She acknowledged that she had fewer years work experience than the cleaner, but she felt that she was underpaid for her qualifications and position responsibilities. As noted in Chapter Three, museum work *per se* was low paid and with museums becoming “business like” several of the research participants felt that museums could no longer exploit their staff with low salaries:

It's not a very lucrative profession. Our director says [they] want to move away from the ivory tower aspects and to get into the hard corporate sort of world because we are now like a business. At the same time [they] were hoping that we will get a [specialist] here who will just want to move themselves for the love of it and for a puny little salary because that is all we can afford. I can't believe that you can think that way. If you're a corporate business, well you have to pay real salaries, you can't just expect people to do it for the love of it.

conservator

Only one research participant, a public programmes manager, felt that she was paid well. She believed it would take an exceptional job to lure her away from the museum world because, despite its bad points, she was familiar with the work culture:

I think that I am pretty well paid for what I do. I don't think it is worth changing jobs for \$5000 because it is a whole lifestyle change really and a way of thinking.

public programmes manager

I became increasingly curious about why the research participants, who felt underpaid, undervalued and dissatisfied, continued working in the museum. Were they committed to their profession or were they “stuck” in their profession? The majority of the research participants felt that radical organisational transformation had irretrievably altered their work. A significant number of the research participants from all areas of the museum were re-evaluating not only their commitment to the organisation but also experienced a steady decline in their passion for their work. One curator commented:

I'd like to get the hell out of here but at the same time there are things that I really do love about the job [...]. I went to my manager and said that I

wanted to leave but I said I would consider not leaving if he agreed to some changes that I really needed to make in the workspace. He made the changes, but I think it would have taken me to saying that before he would have done it. [But,] my dissatisfaction has gone too far and for too long.

curator

Although these women were dissatisfied with their work, the dearth of museum jobs held them back from simply resigning. They were sensitive to the fact that museum positions did not come often but they were also highly aware that they would be unable to sustain their dissatisfaction with their current position for long; it was a delicate balance. Further caution came from the tight employment market and the sense that they would have to re-skill in order to find other work. Some had thought about moving overseas:

I have no idea about where I could move. I feel very stuck, incredibly stuck; I just don't know what there would be. Consultant work would be pretty scary; I wouldn't want to go there. Project managing, so much of that is fund raising, politicking and sponsorship, that is not me, so I don't know really.

curator/manager

The problem is that I may well be a lot happier in a completely different job. But I am finding it hard to sort out what I want to do and the possibilities that are out there are quite difficult at the moment, the labour climate and economics, that sort of thing.

curator

About half of the research participants were assessing their current position because of high stress levels and their quality of life had deteriorated. One woman had recently moved to a smaller regional museum because it was the best thing for her and her family. A few women were aware that work stress had become “unhealthy” and they did “not like what they had become”:

Professionally I was worried about going out of the loop and it still worries me, but I've got other factors to think about in regards to the kids. I traded off lifestyle for the prestige and the future career prospects. The next step for me should have been to a bigger institution [etc.]. But really, it came

down to what I wanted. I enjoy the prestige of the work. But the financial gains of it versus whether in fact it is good for me as a person and will it be good for my kids to see their mother continually stressed out, bugger it.

curator

Part of the reason why some of the research participants were dissatisfied was because a shift in the museum's direction differed radically from the initial reason why they had commenced work in the museum sector. A curator spoke of conflict of interest between the expectations of management and the professional values of some staff; she described a point of resistance by some of her colleagues to management's expectation that curators "tow the line." Through the processes of radical organisational transformation this curator noted a mismatch between her curatorial colleagues' original attraction to museum work, working with objects, to museum's current direction, which was more corporate:

There is just a general feeling that [we are] expected to tow the line and meet the expectations that I guess are different from why people get into museum work in the first place.

curator

As noted in Chapter Five, there are certainly some fundamental contradictions between the values and practices of "managers" and "professionals" (Flynn 1999: 18; see also DiMaggio 1988: 8). However the disparity between the "expectations" held by management compared to that of curators symbolises what Brooks & Harfield (2000) describe as "breaking the psychological contract." As noted at the beginning of the chapter most of the research participants' felt it was important to work for an organisation that they "believed in." Realising that this belief was beginning to erode, and for some dramatically, often entailed extensive "sense making," and some of the interview conversations reflected this. One curator commented:

One of the most frustrating things of talking to you now, and of my whole job, is that I am having trouble getting my head around it [...] I actually find these hard questions [...]. I seem to be in a state of becoming like everybody else and I don't know where it will end up.

curator

Breaking their “psychological contract” with the museum would be difficult for the research participants. Many felt that much of their identity was tied up in the museum. One woman did not want to contemplate the idea of leaving museum work, as she felt wholly committed to the institution. This same woman had experienced the nervous breakdown. Another research participant was taking maternity leave and felt for “personal and professional reasons” she needed to return to the museum otherwise she would feel “dissatisfied.” To most of the research participants, leaving the museum sector altogether would require building up another identity. One had decided to leave the museum to take up her primary work as an artist, which had been neglected for many years. However, before leaving, she had a few work goals to achieve to provide her with a sense of completion:

Working here has formed so much of my identity.

marketing manager

I just wouldn't feel as if I had done a very good job if I leave now. I feel like there is more work to do, not just for the museum and the collections, but for myself as well.

curator

I would really like to stay here and see some things through a little bit longer before I give up. I never really meant to work in this profession for so long and it would seem weird not to have the identity I have been living with for about 20 years. It would be scary to walk away from what feels like a very secure job [...] but I have always had the art thing in the back of my mind.

conservator

Those of the research participants least negatively affected by organisational change were in middle management positions. They commented that their commitment and loyalty to the institution remained “solid.” For these women, a move from the museum was thought of in terms of career development. For example, one middle manager her work had recently become monotonous and had lost its challenging appeal. A collection manager said she occasionally applied for work as a strategy to see “how she stacked” up within the profession. Another manager thought she had already experienced her “ideal job.” Even if they left museums *per se* their

commitment, passion and interest still lay in the cultural sector, particularly for those who held arts degrees:

I always knew that I would gravitate towards an arts organisation.

educator/director

I am interested in and really do enjoy heritage work, so I would still like to work in the heritage field.

public programmes manager

6.6 Conclusion

Of the 17 research participants, a small handful of women, primarily middle managers, appeared to be content with their current position. The few women felt valued within the organisation, overall, they appeared to be thriving and their commitment to the museum remained unchanged:

It is such a high profile organisation that you have a real sense, an element of pride about working here.

The majority, however, found components of their work unsatisfying due to feeling under-utilised, or were experiencing high levels of stress due to a deterioration in their daily work conditions which in turn negatively impacted on their quality of life. Most of the women, from all areas of the museum, described a daily work practice that symbolised “survival.” They were surviving long hours and heavy workloads, which contributed to high levels of stress. Some got sick, some got angry, and others suffered from unstable mental health, through depression, “breakdown,” or “burnout.” They tolerated low pay and a sense that their work was undervalued by the organisation. While most of the research participants had thoughts about moving on, only one research participant actually chose to leave the museum. It appeared that part of their survival tactic was to remain working in the museum, or as several women stated, to “ride it out” in the hope that the turmoil from organisational change would soon settle down.

At the time of interviewing several women were active job seekers. They hoped that moving to a new job in another museum would solve their current workplace dissatisfaction, yet they were aware that their options were limited due to the scarcity of museum jobs. There were contradictory trends in the research participants career paths, on the one hand the scarcity of museum jobs combined with the low turnover of museum staff certainly portrays an image of stability, yet the small size of the museum sector and the slow turnover of museum positions also causes a number of people to plateau in certain positions (Pattillo 1997: 31). This pattern tended to reflect that of curators and conservators. Most of the research participants entered at a junior level position as a curator, exhibition designer, collection manager or educator. Some quickly moved onto more senior positions including middle management and directorial roles because of the opportunities presented by organisational transformation, this tended to be the pattern for those who held public programmes and marketing roles. The research participants were committed to working in museums and most of the research participants had a commitment and interest in the arts, culture and heritage fields in general. Yet there was also a strong sense held by all of the research participants that they had limited alternative employment options beyond the museums.

What was evident is that when these women first entered the museum sector they were “passionate about museums.” The research participants’ passion for museums, museum objects and the museum visitor was initially strong and they obtained some work satisfaction and validation from the museum visitor interacting with the museum objects, exhibitions and programmes. The diverse skills, expertise and knowledge of their colleagues also appealed to the research participants, adding to some extent to their attraction and commitment to museums, but not always. For some the feeling of closeness with their colleagues, similar to that of a “family,” had slowly eroded. Conflict between staff was increasingly evident and brought about through the process of teamwork and the pressure of meeting deadlines.

The work ethos of the new management model, as noted in Chapter Five, has instilled an efficient and fast-result work practice. Producing work-related stress for some, this change also allowed the research participants to experience a sense of excitement and opportunity for career advancement, particularly during the process of project work. A few women knew that the radical organisational transformation had created a gulf between their individual work values and commitment to the museum with the new management model. For these few women, recognising this imbalance as a factor of organisational change, rather than as a fault within themselves or their professional credibility, took considerable self-reflection and understanding. They certainly didn't want to appear that they were simply walking away:

I've always been ashamed of just opting out; it's like making a negative choice, just choosing to walk away from something.

curator

Change evident from the new economic environment has significantly altered the culture of museums as a place to work and the next chapter explores this change in terms of gender. Specific attention will be placed on how "feminine" work practices are performed in the workspace while traditional "masculine" strongholds of power still exist (Bradley 1999; 2000).

Chapter Seven:

The Difference Gender Makes

7.1 Introduction

Halford & Leonard (2001: 9) argue that understanding the role of gender in organisations is complex; on the one hand there are “repeating entrenched patterns of gender inequity” with clearly demarcated roles for women to fulfil, yet on the other hand, some gender inequities have been upended, for example, women’s role in the employment market has been better accepted and some women are making it into management positions. The research participants cited examples such as pay inequity, “glass ceilings,” sexual harassment, and sexism. Others spoke of gender differences where “women had to work twice as hard as men” and commented on how men were promoted faster than women were. Several research participants spoke of implicit expectations about appropriate behaviour and dress for women.

In a manner of speaking the research participants conversations concerning the difference that gender made to their experience in the museum sector could be framed as ways in which they “became more or less women” (Halford & Leonard 2001: 88). In other words, the research participants interview conversations about gender were both strategic and fluid.

Following from my understanding of the processes of feminisation as outlined in Chapter Three and touched upon in Chapter Five we can see that while certain work practices have feminised the work culture has not. Bradley (1999) argues that under the rhetoric of equality women have had the opportunity to advance their careers in organisations while at the same time male power still permeates throughout the organisation. In other words, the feminisation of work has led to more women being placed in management roles, particularly middle management, however this does not necessarily equate to a feminisation of power (Bradley 2000).

7.2 *Being Professional*

Although women have entered the workplace and are there to stay they nevertheless have to negotiate their work identities around a set of pre-existing narratives of gender relations (Halford & Leonard 2001: 92). Gender-labour market studies in the 1980s reveal that women typically were paid less than men, had less secure employment than men, were segregated into a limited range of occupations and had unequal access to promotional career opportunities compared to that of men (Adkins 1995: 2). However workplace attitudes towards women have altered since the 1980s and particularly since the 1990s. The particular work culture I have been describing throughout the thesis concerns the culture of new managerialism. Throughout the 1980s and particularly since the 1990s museums were establishing their “competitive advantage” in the market place and staff were required to work longer hours and more intensely than previously in order to meet project deadlines. As noted in Chapter Four, operating under the rhetoric of equality women were “accepted” and could advance within organisations that adopt the new managerial ethos providing they could deliver the specific work objectives and survive the work culture. According to the research participants in order to survive the new work culture required a “robust” and “go-getting” attitude.

While the research participants were from a similar age bracket, 28–42 years and self-identified as mid-career, their race, sexuality, class position and domestic responsibilities certainly differed. Halford & Leonard point out that each woman will hold different positions and thus different experiences within the same organisational culture (2001: 93). Significantly all the research participants noted some difficulty with being perceived as “professional” or “credible.” I was curious about how much of this problem was directly related to their gender and how much of this related to the transition into a new corporate culture. Similarly, feminist researchers (Eveline 1998: 90; Harris 1992: 14) point out that when women experienced “problems” in the workplace they were often considered as the “problem” rather than the workplace culture itself. For example, women needed to “work longer hours” or “act more

assertively” in order to operate effectively in the current competitive workplace environment.

The sense that the research participants felt they were “not credible” in part stems from debates concerning the professional status of museum work *per se*. I have found parallels between the museum sectors pursuit for professional status and the work of Roma Harris’ (1992: 6) North American-based study on librarianship. The pursuit for professional status is one method of attempting to raise the status of these occupations and includes a code of ethics, methods of best practice and member associations for example. However, Harris outlines a fundamental problem with the librarian’s pursuit for professional status, namely that under the professional model the practitioner is the “expert” who knows what is best for their client. This model, Harris believes, goes against the “democratic” ideals of service professionals such as librarians where they “discover what the clients need and fulfil these needs by using specialised knowledge and skills” (1992: 19).

There are certainly some parallels between Harris’ analysis of librarianship and that of museum professionals, particularly in regard to their pursuit of professional status (see Van Mensch 1989) and in their democratic ideals of providing service for the public (see Weil 1990). There are also some overlaps in regard to how under the market-led model services offered by museum professions and librarians are required to operate like profit-driven organisations, charging for their services, time and expertise which go against the democratic ideals of open access. Harris also adds that librarianship was considered to have comparatively low value and status compared to other professional occupations, such as medicine and law,⁶⁰ because it is a female-intensive occupation (Harris 1992: 6). Thus going back to the research participants’ experiences of “lacking credibility” although there lies the delicate issue of whether in

⁶⁰ I prefer to argue that medicine and law may have more symbolic professional status primarily because these professions have also experienced a marked increase in the number and ration of women, see Chiu & Leicht (1999) on the legal profession.

fact a profession exists this is further exacerbated by their gender particularly as the museum sector, like the librarianship, is increasingly female dominated.

Subtle differences the research participants could make to enhance the value of their professional status were to project a “professional image”, through dress, language and behaviour. Being professional was more marked as museums were undertaking steps to become corporate. In the process museum professionals, both men and women, have had to “lift” their image to suit the museums’ corporate move:

It feels like quite a regime, we are told how to behave, and how to answer telephones. It is a whole business out there, loads of seminars and training programmes for staff about how to manage each other and how to manage the public and all sorts of things – fascinating.

information services

Yet, underlying the quest to appear more professional there appear to be differences in authenticity and acceptance between women and men. Significantly the research participants viewed dressing professionally as a method for women, particularly young women, aged in their 20s and 30s, in positions of responsibility in order to gain “acceptance.” They described this as “playing the game,” in the words of one public programmes manager she simply had a “power jacket” hanging in her office, which she wore for meetings:

I kind of have to play their game in a way, which I don't really like doing, and meet them on their terms in order for them to understand that I am competent in what I do. If I have a meeting with them I might have to dress in a certain way, like wear a power jacket [...]. They can see that I can bring a corporate mentality to a certain situation [...]. It is like you have to prove yourself to them first. But I think if I worked in another environment I would still have to play the corporate role and wear a business suit to get the respect from men that is required.

public programmes manager

In fact, dressing professionally, according to a public programmes manager, was part of women gaining acceptance from men in all facets of professional work culture.

In more general terms, Halford & Leonard (2001: 75-76) argue that “structural male power” is coded in the workplace through various types of imagery, and upholding a corporate dress code where both women and men are expected to wear “suit-like” clothing is just one method. However the museum is a different work environment to an everyday office in the corporate world. The research participants somewhat resisted institutional pressure to dress in a way that they considered to be symbolic of the new management model, conservative and business like, as it conflicted with their image of the museum as a creative work culture. Dressing professionally at first felt like a restriction but they also conformed. The research participants spoke of dressing professionally as a – being less female – tactic, not always enjoyed, but nevertheless a useful method for obtaining professional respect from their male peers and members of the public when required. This vigilance starts with the way women dress but also filters into their language, method of communication and type of relationship with their colleagues (Halford & Leonard 2001: 158-159). For example, one curator made a “decision” to learn the skill of dressing “more professionally,” which included wearing a suit and make-up. Initially she felt like “a fraud” because she judged professionalism by someone’s skill, knowledge and expertise rather than by what someone wore. After the curator’s initial unwillingness, once she understood the significance of this ritual, she began to enjoy the effects that her “professional clothing” had in giving her more authority and respect:

[Some of my colleagues] are very superficial people and if you manipulate your appearance, they are going to respond to you differently. So I started dressing in a different way, like wearing more makeup and it did have an effect [...]. I became a lot more skilled at that sort of thing, like wearing a suit to work, it is something I never used to do, but when you are fronting up to a meeting with directors about money, it sure helps to look the part, or if you have people coming who want you to identify an object they are really reassured to seeing somebody wearing a suit, someone who looks like they know what they are talking about. At first, I felt like a fraud, now I actually quite like doing that.

curator

Both the public programmes manager and the curator had “accepted” the necessity of dressing professionally; they viewed it as a form of membership to the work culture and importantly, as a symbol of being professional. Further women’s credibility is

measured through their physical presentation, where they “manage their sexuality, gender and femaleness as a necessary part of their organisational membership” (Halford & Leonard 2001: 158-159). In the context of the museum, exploiting femininity appeared acceptable providing it was subtle, as a collection manager recounted of her colleague’s conscious technique:

She had this amazingly beautiful long hair and she found that if she asked for something she usually got it more times if she had her hair down than if she had it up – we used to smile over that.

information services manager

In contrast, blatantly exposing your sexuality was neither appropriate nor professional. In the words of the public programmes manager:

One person came to work yesterday; I couldn’t believe it, with a see-through shirt on. You could see their underwear under it, you could see their breasts under their underwear and I just thought that is not appropriate to wear to work. If you want some things from people, you have to speak their language [and] if their language is wearing a jacket to a meeting then you do it. But you don’t show up really casually dressed, you just don’t do it, it’s not professional.

public programmes manager

In another case, a museum educator, who was used to the messy work of interacting with school children, when temporarily promoted to project work was expected to invest her money and purchase a corporate wardrobe suitable for her secondment. Once the project was completed, she was then expected to wear the new “casual” work uniform. The casual uniform was part of the museum’s new image, portrayed a “friendly” image, and made her and other front-of-house staff easily identifiable to the visiting public. Although she knew the uniform was appropriate for the nature of her work, she felt that by wearing the uniform she was stripped of her “professional credibility,” it took away her sense of individuality, and left her with a redundant wardrobe:

I was told when working on the project that I was doing a great job but I was not dressing professionally enough. So I spent hundreds of dollars buying

what I thought would fit this image and I felt comfortable in. Then when the project was finished we have to wear jeans and this tee shirt and suddenly I think, “hang on what happened to the professionalism here?” I have spent all this money on this wardrobe, which I can no longer wear to work. I’ll tell you, I’d hate to walk into one of those meetings now dressed like this, because I don’t think they would give me the respect because I look so casual [...].

educator manager

Unless the research participants were expected to wear a uniform, the dress code invariably was unspoken yet crucial to their membership of an increasingly corporate work environment. Dressing professionally was gendered in so far as the women felt the need to perform a distinct dress code that reflected the dominant male norm, they could exploit their femininity – being more female – providing the display was subtle, such as an attractive hairstyle. Image was very powerful, one collection manager spoke of actively choosing to change her image; she “feminised” her physical appearance by “smiling.” She recounted:

Most people see what I do as quite bureaucratic and a waste of time. Earlier on in my career I had a reputation for being difficult, it was partly my job role but you get perceived as neurotic, pedantic and bureaucratic [...]. So I decided I was going to smile more. This had an incredible effect. Your facial expression changes and so people react to you quite differently. You can say something that might be considered quite difficult but if you are smiling it is not read as an attack, so smiling more has been useful.

collection manager

Adkins (2001) and Bruegel (2000) argue that since the 1990s, the labour market has become more fluid and employment relations more complex. As noted in earlier chapters, in late capitalist economies in both the private and the public sectors, service has become a commodity which the public as a consumer purchases (see Harfield 1997; Peters 2001). In turn the “feminine performance” of service has become a vital resource in the labour market where the behaviour, image, appearance and style of both men and women are key resources in the new service occupations, as well as the more traditional feminine roles of customer care (Adkins 2001: 3).

The way in which the women said that they consciously and strategically dressed professionally supports Adkins (2001: 9) argument that gender performances in the service profession, such as museums, are fluid. Both men and women are expected to sell their image, in this case being a “competent professional” as part of the museum’s product. Successfully mastering the professional dress code for the female body, which included makeup, hairstyles and a smile, provided the research participants the symbolic value of professional competence and credibility, but only up to a point.

7.3 *Favouring “Feminine” Work Practices*

Adkins (2001) argues that in tourist and leisure economies, including museums, the quality of customer service is closely related to the quality of the product. Customer service is not limited to front-of-house visitor reception roles; all museum staff from all areas of the museum must contribute to the “visitor experience,” in the words of McLean:

Training in customer care for staff at all levels, not just the customer contact staff is equally relevant in museums. It should inculcate recognition by all staff, not just front-line staff, of their role in delivering a quality service to the customer. The person writing the labels for the exhibits, the cleaner dusting down the cases, the demeanour of the attendant at the entrance, are all crucial in defining the quality of the service (1997: 121).

Drawing further from McLean (1997: 121-122), quality service includes three factors, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Most of the research participants spoke of “connecting” with the public and “sharing their passion.” Responsiveness in this context involved the ability to “communicate” or “connect” with the visiting public or customer. The caring role of service was not strictly limited to the museum’s public and many of the research participants extended the caring role through their attachment or commitment to the museum collections. Empathy with the museum’s visitor certainly shaped the research participants’ daily work practice. As noted in

Chapter Six, many of the research participants spoke of the importance of “service” through “engaging with the museum public” to make their visit a “more meaningful experience.” What McLean describes as “assurance,” the ability to draw on their skills and knowledge, was evident in the way the research participants, educators, interpreters, exhibition designers, and curators endeavour to bring the collections to the public through the visitor experience.

The increase of customer service role has arguably led to an increase in the number and ratio of women employed in the museum sector and women have been presented with opportunities for promotion to middle management positions. One education manager talked about “women management styles,” which she considered consultative and in essence meant “teamwork:”

Everything I do brings in other people. I don't exist on my own in education, there is a series of people that I work with to make it all happen [...]. What I have learnt from management is that it is probably more like a female style of management. I mean the team issues are actually becoming more important and I think that actually comes from a more feminine approach to management.

educator/director

Marshall (1995: 15) warns against arguments that women bring alternative qualities to management, which are perceived to be more interactive and less hierarchical. First, it enhances gender stereotypes of women as caring, nurturing and relational (Marshall 1995: 16). Second, with economic restructuring many museums have adopted a de-layered or flat organisation structure creating a demand for middle managers to facilitate and implement the “change work”. Most the research participants who were in management roles were located at “middle management:”

In middle management, you're the workhorse to make things happen.

exhibition design manager

Although many of the research participants were in middle management or senior roles, some disputed whether women managers made a “difference” to the culture of

the museum sector. Clustering women into middle management roles means that institutional power is still a male dominated terrain. A curator commented:

I have probably had more role models of how I don't want to be. It is still frustrating for me. The never-ending question is do I really want to aspire to those top jobs and what is it going to do to me? Because it is only at those levels that you can make real changes and what's the trade off?

curator

To become a museum director appeared not to be a viable option. Interestingly all but one of the research participants spontaneously stated that “they did not want to be a museum director,” and they clearly distanced themselves from the prospect of advancing into a director positions, which obviously has more institutional power. Yet it is only in the top strata of management that an organisational culture can be radically transformed and it appears that the top strata remains a male reserve.

On a more general level, as more women have entered the museum sector, at the same time organisational structures of the museum have shifted creating a glut of women in middle management positions or clustering them in customer service roles. So whilst it appears that women have gained leverage in status and high rank positions within the museum, men are able to use their positional and symbolic power to temper an equal distribution of power between men and women within the organisation (Bradley 1999: 211; Nesbitt 1997: 161). In other words, “the rules and norms of employment are still laid down by men largely policed by men, and reflect the practices of dominant masculinities” (Bradley 1999: 213).

In the next section I consider Adkins (2001: 1) claim that in a service economy the customer service role is applied to both men and women, yet men have more flexibility and room to manoeuvre than women. Evident from the research participant's conversations traditional notions of sex discrimination require women to dress, smile and be subservient. There was evidence that despite the organisational upheavals, men continued to hold positional power networks still existed.

7.4 *The Bumpy Rise of Women to Middle Management Positions*

All of the research participants spoke of problems with “being taken seriously.” Some attributed this to their age as well as their gender. The research participants’ reactions varied; one public programmes manager talked about “feeling patronised:”

When you have young women in positions [of] responsibility, being taken seriously is a real problem. People are often quite patronising of you, that is an ongoing problem.

public programmes manager

Although the public programmes manager does not clarify specifically which “people” were patronising, given the context of the interview conversation as a whole she was referring to “some male colleagues” and particularly “outsiders” who had been contracted to the museum to undertake project work. Interestingly an exhibition design manager who was an outsider said she experienced muted hostility from members of her team:

When I first started here my department wasn't sorted. I was younger than all my staff and I needed their support with the things that I needed to change. That didn't go down so well.

exhibition design manager

It is also interesting to note that whilst the research participants actively talked about their age and their need to obtain “credibility,” one information services manager had also been promoted over their older male colleagues, in her words “thrust up by default,” with mixed responses. While she recognised that she was appropriately qualified for the position she was also aware that her promotion was not readily accepted:

I was promoted over my colleagues' heads and that caused major problems and I don't know how much was associated with being a woman or if it was because I hadn't been here as long.

information services manager

In another situation another collection manager noted how her male manager had “fostered” her because she had pointed out to him that men were often promoted over women. Ironically, at the time of interviewing her position as manager had been in an “acting” capacity for some months:

We took on a new staff member, he was male, and my boss said to me, “how do you think he will go?” I said, “I think he will go really far and really fast and he will probably overtake me.” My boss then said, “why?” and I said “well just because he is male.” I think my boss took what I said on board and didn’t actually let that happen which is why he fostered me as his second in command and that I was the logical choice when he left. So I took over the acting role. It’s been really interesting because I am now managing a lot of older “boys” who have been there much longer than me. Usually they would be seen to have seniority over me being younger and female.

collection manager

In some circumstances, the research participants willingly played a subservient role; this was most significant for Maori women:

On Kaitiaki issues, it is slightly different because I respect the man’s role in the whole area of Maori issues. So, if I am asked something I always try and get the support of the Kaumatua to make sure what I am doing is correct.

museum professional with additional Kaitiaki role

Even so, such divisions between age, gender and race are not devoid of complexity. Another Maori research participant spoke of the subtle overlays of her position as a Maori and as a woman working with taonga. She recounted how a young Maori man once questioned the appropriateness of her role in working with a particular taonga:

This guy called me out once and I turned around and said to him, “look buddy if I wasn’t supposed to be here I wouldn’t be here.” Personally I believe that surely it is better that I should do it as a mokopuna⁶¹ of those taonga rather than a Pakeha person.

museum professional with additional Kaitiaki role

⁶¹ Grandchild.

The implementation of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policies have been useful as a means of fostering the employment of Maori employment in museums, yet EEO policies are limited in terms of the complexity of Maori protocol in regard to age and gender.

In fact most of the research participants disputed whether EEO policies had any real impact on the museum sector. In the words of the public programmes manager, she questioned whether the museum's EEO policies had provided women with opportunities for professional development:

When it comes to EEO principles or just female equality in the workforce, I don't think that there is any evidence that one way or another the museum has a policy of say fostering female staff. That just doesn't enter at all.

public programmes manager

In another case a marketing manager described the consultative process undertaken by the museum to implement its EEO policy. She noted that she and other women in the museum "distanced" themselves from the unspecified "brand of feminism" that the consultant proffered and from the need of having an EEO policy at all. In essence, the marketing manager viewed the policy as a bureaucratic procedure rather than a meaningful policy initiative:

There was going to be a gender policy but it never eventuated. A woman was contracted in to do it, she travelled around a bit and got other people's views and there was a lot of discussion amongst women in the offices about the gender policy. A lot of us just didn't buy into the same sort of brand of feminism that this woman was importing so it was an uneasy sort of situation and nothing came out of it really [...]. Some of us were unsure whether we needed one or not. The EEO policy was explored about the same time as a sexual harassment policy was developed which was fairly lame, you kind of thought that it was a requirement to have one.

marketing manager

On the whole, discussion about “gender” or “feminism” was vague. Most of the research participants were highly aware of the issues of feminism in the 1970s and 1980s surrounding equal pay, sexual harassment and gender equity. Yet at the same time several of the research participants questioned the value of EEO policies and the type of feminism it represented. Both the public programmes manager and the marketing manager were unconvinced that an EEO policy was necessary for advancing women’s promotion opportunities within the museum. One educator who was more open to discussing EEO and feminism, suggested that feminism had become very complex:

Feminism of the 1970s was an overt sex war but now we have guerrilla warfare.

educator/director

Bradley et al (2000: 89) argue that younger women, those who were children in the 1970s, grew up with an awareness of the 1970s feminist movement but “are more strongly influenced by the discourse of individualism, featuring freedom, independence and the right to make one’s own choices.” The two managers who were unsure about the value of the museum’s EEO policy were both young, in their 30s. By distancing themselves from this policy they too were strategically distancing themselves from the 1970s feminism and instead chose to “play the game” of dressing and acting “professionally” as a tactic to win “credibility.”

7.5 *The Prevailing Male Work Culture*

EEO policies aside, women’s employment and promotion opportunities are products of contradictory forces (Halford & Leonard 2001; Bradley et al 2000). On the one hand, with the increase of women’s opportunities to gain access to higher education, it is likely that increasing numbers of (middle-class) young women have the appropriate qualifications and work experience that are rewarded with career advancement (Bradley et al 2000: 77, 81; Walby 1997). On the other hand, the dominant work culture tends to favour the young and mobile (Halford & Leonard 2001; Hochschild 1989: xi). Ironically the prime childbearing years – late 20s and early 30s – are also a peak period for career advancement (Hachschild 1989: xi). Those with family

responsibilities may find it difficult to put in the hours and workloads required of the competitive work culture and thus, receive future promotion (Bradley et al 2000: 88). In Chapter Six I commented how the research participants with children had to rely on other family members to be with the children while they worked the long hours required during the process of project work.

Interestingly, only three of the 17 research participants, who were aged between 28 – 42 years of age, had children even though they fell within the recognised “childbearing years.” Evans’ 1992 study observed a similar trend with 36 per cent of her survey respondents aged between 26 – 36 years of age (p. 17) and 70 per cent of Evans’ 125 survey respondents did not have children (p. 48). Despite the small number of research participants involved in this study who had children, certain sex role stereotypes were associated with their social role as a mother. In the words of an education manager during a job interview she was asked inappropriate questions regarding her role as a mother. These women implied that she would be unable to wholly commit herself to her museum work, in other words she was “too female”:

I was asked during my interview, “what are you going to do if your children get sick?” I found it really insulting because I have never heard a man say that he was asked that during an interview. Or, “what if you get pregnant?” My answer was, “that I would deal with that situation at the time, I can’t see it happening, I’m not planning for it,” and basically tried to fob it off and move onto the next question. But I really think that they see “woman” as a slight weakness because you’ve got these foibles you might get pregnant or children get sick and when they get sick they want their mummies.

education manager

Other forms of “inappropriate” assessment experienced by the research participants were subtle but pervasive. For example, the research participants spoke of how women could not “get angry” whereas men could. Women’s anger was interpreted as a being “pre-menstrual.” In either case, the women were considered out-of-control:

Men have more credibility than women do. In one case if you had a conflict with somebody you’d come across as this hysterical female, only men could

have a personality conflict. But they never sort of seemed to click onto the fact that almost all of the women staff had a “personality conflict” with the same male staff member.

collection manager

There is the belief that if a woman loses her cool she probably has PMT, if a man [loses his cool] it is justifiable anger.

information services manager

In these sexist views, not only were women’s moods uncontrollably affected by their female hormones, they were expected to behave in certain ways. An education manager spoke of pressure to be “bubbly” whilst working under incredible pressure:

Being a bubbly person is really awful because you have got to have a smile on your face all the time [...]. You know I’d feel shattered, but as soon as I walked into the museum I would put my smile back on and try and be bubbly and happy and get through the work and then walk out of the museum feeling shattered again – only because I did not want to show that I was not part of this corporate image or that I could not handle the work pressures.

education manager

A significant number of the research participants noted how women, in general, had to work “harder than men” and that women were not “heard.” One collection manager attributed this to men having more credibility than women:

If you acknowledge that men have more credibility than women then you can work within that, and I was in a situation once, a meeting where a woman, oh this was a classic – a woman went “blah, blah” and everyone went, “hmm” and then about 10 minutes later a man went “blah, blah” and it was received so much better. And she said, “Oh isn’t it amazing when a man says it” and we just cracked up, she made it really blatant, it was really good.

collection manager

A curator also experienced not being heard during a meeting. This was particularly crucial as the curators’ calibre often rests on having ideas. She, too, took some time to consider why she was not heard. After undertaking some self-reflection to see

whether it was her method of communication, she decided that the problem was in fact her gender:

It is not easy to get up in front of people and just insist that your idea is the best. I've tried and I've been slapped down. Every so often we have to put forward these ideas for exhibitions or publications, and I always put forward several and they would end up going nowhere. Then we might have a brain storming session and you would say something, there would be this pause, and everyone would look blank. A few minutes later some guy would say the same thing and everyone would say, "Oh you genius." Sometimes I wondered if it was just my timing or thought that I wasn't speaking loud enough, somehow it must be my fault. [Now] I have realised that sometimes my ideas would be more palatable if I wasn't a woman.

curator

This curator asked herself why men's utterances appeared to be more credible even though there were no differences in what the women or men said. She felt that this was partly attributed to the fact that women were "conditioned" to act in certain ways and were clearly expected to take on certain roles. As noted, women could not get angry; assertiveness and rudeness were also contentious behaviours. A preferred role for women was in a "supportive" role:

If I have wanted to please people there was a very clear path for me to take and that was in a "supporting role".

curator

In the case of the curator, being territorial or possessive of her achievements were qualities associated with more "masculine" behaviours' and thus in her claim to her right to have ideas she would be "unsexing" herself – becomes less female:

I don't know whether you would call it a gender thing but women tend to be a bit more self-effacing. I find it quite hard to blow my own trumpet and because I have spent so much time trying to please other people that I don't really know what I want. I am so anxious to please that I sculpt my enjoyment and expectations around what other people want me to do. I just see that as being the way I am taught to be a woman.

curator

For some of the research participants, there was a very clear path for them not only in terms of behaviour but also in occupational choice. Those who specialised in the arts commented about pressure to take “girlie subjects” at school because they were considered appropriate for “nice, middle class girls”⁶², which in turn influenced their career path into the arts and, in some cases, education. The research participants who worked in conservation and education noted that they were female intensive fields. Importantly, they described gendered factors such as women’s apparent willingness to accept low pay and low status work:

I felt really angry that the educational positions are the lowest paid of any other positions in the museum basically. I knew I had pretty darn good qualifications and yet I was on the lowest salary in the museum. I think women under-value themselves, they accept low salaries, we don’t fight for them, we accept bad positions, we seem to accept being pushed around.

educator/director

In the conservation profession [...] there seem to be more women than men. I can think of good reasons and negative reasons, like we are willing to accept a profession that doesn’t have high salary levels.

conservation

In contrast, those in collection management and curatorial roles did not necessarily view them as female intensive fields but instead talked about men’s privilege through positional power. Examples include how men were promoted quicker than women, and that “powerful” men determined the conditions of how the up-and-coming younger (male) professionals would be received:

My male colleague will go far and fast despite himself and simply because he is a male.

collection manager

⁶² Halford & Leonard (2001) discuss how women’s experiences within an organisational culture varies, depending on their position within the organisation, their colleagues and even their ethnicity, age and class background. Only two of the research participants discussed class differences within the museum profession. Even then, their comments were associated with gender and power dynamics within the organisation so I will not separate class out as a discussion in this chapter.

I do find myself thinking from time to time how life would be different if I were a man in my current job. I have seen that my male colleagues who have started at the same time or since me have jetted past me and not necessarily because they are any better than I am but they do have oodles of confidence and they do get a lot more support.

curator

One curator noted how her male colleagues mistreated her; at worst her ideas were not heard and when she was heard, she experienced “belittlement.”

A lot of my put downs have come from powerful men. I have tended to just shut down and feel terrible, and my head would literally sink on my chest.

curator

Not only did some of the research participants believe that men had more resources, support and privilege within the museum; one educator commented on women’s secondary status. She believes that the current competitive work environment has created a sense of isolation, where traditional support networks have been replaced by an individualistic *laissez-faire* attitude and women have been “casualties” of this culture. If women do succeed in the current climate they need to adopt a certain “don’t mess with me kind of attitude,” an attitude that goes against the expected gender norms. In other words, since museums have undertaken organisational change in order to succeed within the new managerial work culture one has to be “less female” even if certain work practices have “feminised.”

7.6 Conclusion

Exploring how individuals make sense of their work experiences assists with gaining a sense of how organisational culture and gender discrimination is reproduced. In this chapter I explored the difficulties the research participants experienced with being professional and obtaining credibility. In essence, age, and notions of what was considered appropriate dress and behaviour for women were contributing factors to women’s professional credibility. There was ambiguity between how much the research participants played up to these gender codes; some described it as “playing the game,” whilst others enacted resistance by calling out or short-circuiting acts of

gender discrimination. In this case, gender, age, ethnicity and positional status interplay within a complexity of overlapping and contradictory work cultures, practices and discourses. Underlying the research participants' discussions about gender and the relationship between gender, feminisation and the new management model, lays the question of power. Although there was evidence that some women had made it by reaching middle management positions they had not made it into senior management roles, indicating that a feminisation of the workplace does not mean the feminisation of power (Bradley 2000).

Conclusion

In this concluding chapter I set out to explore the effectiveness of “feminisation theory” for assessing the impact of radical organisational change in the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand during the period 1984 –1999. First I summarise the aim of each chapter in the thesis. Second, I draw from the case of curators, an occupational group that has been notably negatively affected by organisational restructuring to highlight ways in which processes of feminisation have occurred within the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand. Third I consider whether the museum sector has *completely* transformed itself through economic restructuring.

Intentions

Three themes shaped my interpretation of the radical transformation of the museum sector: economic restructuring, a shift in the museums’ conception of the visiting public, and the dramatic increase in the number and ratio of women employed in the sector combined with a noticeable decline in work conditions. I discussed each of these themes separately in Chapters One, Two and Three; there were overlaps between each of these themes, but also some inconsistencies.

Chapter One outlined the significance of the neo-liberal inspired economic restructuring programme instigated in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1984 which laid the foundation for the introduction of a new management model in the museum sector. In order to be deemed accountable, museums became more commercial in both policy and practice and the success of the museum was based on economic factors, such as the ability to sell the museum’s products and services to the museum customer. Chapter Two focused on shifts in the museums’ perception of the museum visitor already occurring in the museum sector both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally prior to 1984, indicating that the museums’ radical transformation was not shaped by economic factors alone. However, since the introduction of the new management model in the museum sector an economic-based ethos of accountability and commercialisation shapes the museum professionals’ thinking about ways to

improve access to the museum and the quality of the visitor experience. In Chapter Three, using quantitative and qualitative sources, I considered ways in which the museum sector in Aotearoa New Zealand had “feminised” within a short period of time. In Chapter Four I discussed the rationale for qualitative research. The task was to draw from interview conversations with mid-career women as a means to probe into the research participants’ experiences of organisational change on a daily level in order to assess the shift in work culture in terms of the processes of feminisation.

Feminisation is a relatively broad term. The broadness of the term is useful as it draws from a wide range of economic, social and cultural factors (Adkins 2001). Economic factors surround the decline of the manufacturing sector and growth of the service sector leading to a shift in employment patterns for both men and women, which I described as the “feminisation of the labour market” (Bradley 2000). Broad level changes include first an increase in both male unemployment in the manufacturing sector and an increase in women’s employment in the service sector and later by male redeployment into the service sector (see Bruegel 2000). Second, economic changes at the sector level include sector growth combined with an inordinate increase in the ratio and number of women employed in an occupation or sector within a specific period of time (Reskin & Roos 1990; Wylie 2000). I used the term the “feminisation of occupations” to frame this process (Bradley 2000). Social factors such as improved education and employment opportunities for women and the introduction of EEO policies have also contributed to women’s increased participation in paid employment, particularly younger women in the professions (Walby 1997; Chiu & Leicht 1999). The cultural change concerns the shift in workplace culture, or the “feminisation of work” (Bradley 2000), indicating new ideals of worker flexibility and teamwork and the increased significance of “customer service”.

Customer service is the key factor to the systematic devaluation of work conditions in the museum sector rather than women’s increased entry alone. First I used media sources to support the idea that a decline in work conditions and an increase in levels of workplace dissatisfaction was occurring both in Aotearoa New Zealand and

internationally. Then in Chapters Five, Six and Seven I selected extracts from interview conversations of 17 mid-career museum professionals, which focused on their perceptions and experiences of the radical transformation of museums in Aotearoa New Zealand. Underlying all of the chapters and crucial to understanding the implications of such change in museums in Aotearoa New Zealand is the shift from the museum collection to the “museum experience.” Thus I needed to be able to explain how the role of museum work had altered in terms of how professional staff from all areas of the museum needed to contribute actively towards the museum experience and if the use of the term “feminisation” was the best tool for conceptualising the implications of this shift.

Feminisation theory was able to account for the impact of economic restructuring policies in terms of adopting the new management model where museums in their desire to be seen as economically accountable and worthy of their expenditure of public funds, have become more corporate. In Chapter Five I discussed the implications of the new management model, which produced a new work culture based on flexibility, fast and efficient work practices and teamwork. Teamwork was seen by some of the research participants to fragment work roles and responsibilities at the expense of their specialised expertise.

With the overall shift in work culture, feminisation theory needed to be able to account for the research participants’ experiences of organisational change. Chapter Six examined breaches in the “psychological contract”; motivated by their passion and commitment to museums the research participants were surviving long hours for low pay as well as experiencing high levels of work-related stress. A scarcity of museum positions and alternative employment routes outside the museum sector and a low turnover of staff gave the research participants a feeling of being “stuck” and increased frustration with current declining work conditions.

In Chapter Seven, I discussed the differences gender made by being “more” or “less” female. Despite the radical organisational transformation of museums which had effectively “opened doors” to women to gain entry into middle management positions, there were still clearly demarcated roles for women to fulfil in terms of “appropriate” behaviour, dress and roles. In addition, all of the research participants commented on having difficulty with gaining acceptance in the museum sector in terms of being “professional” and “credible”. This difficulty is indicative of continuing patterns of gender discrimination where women are considered “deficient” rather than the workplace culture itself (Eveline 1998). Although there was also evidence of some breakthrough in women’s advancement in the museum sector there were limitations to such breakthroughs, with a dearth of women, particularly Maori women, represented in top museum positions (Evans 1992; Pattillo 1997) suggests that men still held positional, economic, and symbolic status in the museum (Bradley 2001: 86). This was certainly evident when we compare the “feminisation of work” to the “culture of work” practised in the museum sector.

Overall we found that “feminising aspects” such as working long hours, meeting tight deadlines and working harder by “being flexible” were eroding work conditions but the underlying culture that valued a “go-getting” “robust personality” and the ability to be present at work for long periods of time were reminiscent of long entrenched “masculine” work practices (Hochschild 1989; Halford & Leonard 2001). While women were entering into middle management positions and valued for their “feminine” communication and collaborative leadership skills, the change was ultimately at a “rhetorical level.” Women have been able to “join in” but on highly conditional terms (Halford & Leonard 2001:89). Museums have “radically transformed” by shifting the business practice from a public service model to a market led model and more women have entered the profession. But the traditional power base including the way power is organised, held and performed has been relatively unaltered. Work cultures are still unable to recognise and accept gender, age, and racial differences. In the words of one research participant, “gender did make a difference.” The research participants strategically negotiated their work identities by

being "more" or "less" female as a means to gain acceptance in the new managerial work culture.

The overall strength of feminisation is that it serves as a useful explanatory tool for discussing the implications of the increased emphasis on customer service and the influx of numbers and ratio of women employed in the sector within the period 1984 – 1999. In the section that follows I outline how the role of curators has altered under the new management model, particularly how the status of the curatorial role has been devalued.

The Case of Curators:

Coinciding with an internal rethink about the purpose of museums the “reality” of commercialisation, based on economic rationalism, has irretrievably altered the way museums operate and the nature of museum work from collections to the museum experience. As the currency of the museum professional has shifted from the “collections” to “providing service,” feminisation has occurred at two levels. First, the traditional stronghold of the curatorial role in the museum has eroded at the same time that the number and ratio of women employed in museum professional positions overall, which includes curatorial roles, have increased. The second factor concerns how the specialised role of curatorial work has deskilled in favour of work skill flexibility (Bradley 1999: 126) and customer service.

We saw in Chapter Two how the role of academic scholarship has been diluted by the museum’s emphasis on “customer service” and curators needed to ensure their research and knowledge can be adequately transferred into an information product for the more general public (McLean 1997: 111). We also saw in Chapter Three how Sotheran, in her defence against Lloyd, argued that the curators’ role had not devalued but the status of other positions, such as marketing, had been elevated to a similar position within the museum hierarchy. According to Sotheran, curators were having difficulty adjusting to the new “cut and thrust” environment, but drawing from the

research participants conversations, there appears to be little place for curators under the new regime of commercialisation and customer focus (Laugesen 2001).

In Chapter Five, several research participants discussed how the role of curators and collection managers would be turned into one job in the next line of restructuring. Macdonald (1998: 120) also writes about the devaluation of the curatorial role where instead of curators creating exhibitions, teams of “interpreters” work to create exhibitions for the lay public that are factual, fun and friendly (p. 121). The curatorial role has been devalued in two ways. First, the role of the interpreter comprises a mix of curatorial and education responsibilities and their purpose is to dismantle the perceived barriers between the curator as “expert” and the lay visitor. Second, creating exhibitions that emphasise entertainment and construe the museum visitor as a customer represents the ideals of the market-model creating, some curators believe, a “fun park” at the expense of quality exhibitions.

Under the new management model, the museum as a public organisation is actively required to generate revenue and the task of collecting, researching and preserving cultural heritage have been reorganised to cater principally for the museum “customer.” Maintaining the collection is seen to involve high use of the museum’s resources, including staff, time and budget (McLean 1997: 108). Usually about 10 per cent of the museum’s collection is on display at any one time (McLean 1997) and in order to render museum collections worthy of their high level of resource use, various methods have been employed to ensure the museum collections contribute directly to the museum experience, aside from the traditional museum exhibition. Examples include visible storage (Merriman 1991), study collections, behind the scenes tours, demonstrations by curators or conservators, computerised access to collections, and loaning objects for exhibition outside the museum in community spaces or to other museums (McLean 1997: 108). In other words, in the reshuffling of museum priorities, the currency of the museum professional has shifted from “having ideas,” the realm of the curator, to “providing customer service.” The prioritisation of customer service in the museum sector has arguably devalued the role of the curator.

A Complete Transformation of Museums and the Museum Profession?

Throughout the thesis I have maintained a tight focus on “processes of feminisation” and the concept of “radical organisational transformation.” In the Preface I considered how the fictitious Lesje would fare with radical organisational transformation and in one of my scenarios suggested that *museums had changed before* and the current crisis could simply be a continuation of that pattern. Thus I need ask whether museums have *completely* transformed and in doing so discuss the weakness of feminisation theory.

The significant weakness of feminisation theory for the purposes of my research project relates to being unable to account for the conflicting discourses between democratisation on the one hand and commercialisation on the other. Although democratisation and the new management model of efficiency and accountability point in the same direction – increasing access to the museum – the underlying values differ. There is a mismatch between the “ideal” of exhibiting and educating and the economic “reality” requiring museums to be more business like. Conflict between the “ideal” and the “real” museum has shaped the museum since its 19th century formation (Bennett 1995: 102). These two sites of conflict have resulted in, and continue to generate, a field of political relations and demands peculiar to the museum and the museum professional operates within these sites of conflict.

The first conflict is produced from the “ideal” of representational adequacy. As noted in Chapter One, the formation of the modern museum in the 19th century embodied universalist aspirations. Through the apparatus of exhibiting and collecting the museum offered a particular representation of humanity. Such universalist portrayals of history, culture or humanity are now considered to be partial, selective and inadequate, which exclude and marginalise groups, cultures and communities (Bennett 1995: 102-103). From this viewpoint, the space of the museum has been subject to constant processes of politicisation (Bennett 1995: 102-103). Museums

have been lobbied to expand the range of its representation and/or to exhibit familiar material in new contexts.

We saw in Chapter Two how museums increasingly are placing emphasis on improving the triangular relationship between the museum exhibit, the museum professional and the museum visitor as a means to dismantle the authoritative voice of the museum, which is arbitrarily symbolised in the role of the curator. Another method used to “democratise” the museum was through employing staff from a variety of demographic backgrounds such as women, Maori and Pacific Islanders.

Porter (1991; 1996), Duncan (1995) and Bennett (1995) point out how museums embodiment of a Eurocentric, worldview lent itself to marginalising “others.” Responses with the museum sector have been diverse as attempts to both expand the range of representational views as well as to dissolve the museum’s authority for constructing partial truths (Porter 1991). Politicising the museum space provided plenty of opportunities for museums and museum professionals to employ new methods to exhibit and construct ourselves in an increasingly diverse society. In the process, the authority of the “curator” has shifted from being “the source of expertise” to “the possessor of technical competence” whose function is to assist the community to access the museums resources (Bennett 1995: 104).

The shift in the role of the curator was in part a response to the increased politicisation of the museum as a public space rather than processes of feminisation alone. However feminisation theory has been useful for describing the qualitative aspects of the shift in work culture, such as how work hours have increased and the speed of work has increased even more contributing to feelings of unease about changes in the workplace, but not shifts in the museological components of museum work *per se*.

The second conflict arises again from the foundation of the early 19th museum, also noted in Chapter Two, which began as an elitist institution designed to either limit access only to the privileged classes or to shape the manners of the under-classes (Ames 1992: 89; Bennett 1995). In recent years with the economic “reality” of fiscal restraint, it has become essential for museums to attract sufficient visitor numbers to justify the continuation of public funding. In response to tighter fiscal restraints combined with the democratic ideals of inclusion, efforts were made by museums to be more popular. Museums have imitated and adopted methods customary to sites of “popular assembly” such as fun fairs, game parks and other tourist and leisure venues, rather than distinguishing themselves from them as they had previously done (Bennett 1995: 104-105; Urry 2002: 120).

Museum professionals appear to be polarised between the museums’ role of entertaining or educating. In terms of the new management model the museum seeks to entertain the museum’s customer and generate revenue through the museum experience. In terms of democratisation, the museum professional aims to serve the public by opening access to the museum and offering their specialised skills and knowledge for the betterment of the community. Significantly, in terms of the new management model, all staff from all areas of the museum need to contribute towards the museum’s product by providing customer service. While all of the research participants had a strong belief in the idea of service to the public the underlying values differ. Service to the public is closely connected to ideals of democratisation, where museum professionals use their expertise to serve the public through research, exhibitions and public programmes. Under the new management model the museum professional provides these same services, but they are manufactured into a product – the museum experience – for the museum visitor to consume. Feminisation theory can account for the manner in which customer service has become part of the museum experience but not how service to the public is constructed within the discourse of democratisation.

Although the new management model's ethos of customer service has become the dominant discourse within the museum sector, the democratic ideal of serving the public is also evident thus indicating points of resistance within the museum sector to being completely subsumed by the new managerialism. As noted in Chapter One, attempts were made by the museum sector to determine their own performance criteria based on museum-centred values of "quality" as well as strategically adopting the market-led value-for-money framework. The new museology is another example of the museum sector attempting to set the parameters of what constitutes methods of best practice and how this fits within the discourse of economic rationalism whilst maintaining the museum's democratic focus of being relevant to their increasingly diverse communities.

While the nature of museum work has undergone processes of feminisation to some extent the political calibre of museum professionals has been preserved. Described by the research participants as 'bad behaviour' – i.e. "fractious personalities," "prima donnas" or "argumentative" – indicate that the types of change fostered under the new management model were "questioned" and when possible resisted. The establishment of museum studies programmes, the formation of indigenous controlled museums, and the survival of museum associations are signs of autonomy within the museum sector where, in its broadest sense, debate and questioning about museums continues within the museum sector. This thesis adds to the continuation of museological debate about the purpose and function of museums and museum professionals in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand.

Overall, feminisation theory is useful for providing a framework for explaining how the nature of the profession has changed. For example, in the process of shifting the museum professionals' role from "the expert" with specialised knowledge to "facilitator," the museum professional serves the community and this needs to be understood both in museological as well as feminisation terms. In the museum's drive towards democratisation, community groups are empowered whilst the traditional academic roles such as curatorial work are disenfranchised and

reconfigured to that of service work. It is the deskilling of certain museum roles; the way in which specialisation is considered “unnecessary” that contributes to the feminisation of museum work but not a feminisation of the culture of museum work.

Postscript – Behind the Scenes of the Thesis

In the eight years since leaving the museum profession the question of whether I would return to the museum has been a difficult one. Studying women's experiences of organisational restructuring has led me to make some critical observations of the museum sector, would I want to re-enter such a work culture and would a museum director want to employ someone who had been "unfaithful"?

Soon after submitting the thesis, partly out of curiosity and partly out of necessity, I applied for and was offered an education/curator position in a small art gallery. The pay was lower than I had initially anticipated but my potential employer was prepared to "negotiate" the hours, and as I also had "second shift" obligations on the home front less hours held some appeal. As the director and I began to fine-tune my contract I came to realise that working in museums was not the right decision. In spite of the fact that declining the position at such a late stage in the process would inconvenience the director I believed that I did not have the energy, passion or commitment to re-enter the museum sector. This is not to say that I no longer have an interest in museums. My interest has simply shifted from that of practising as a museum professional to that of a researcher who is interested in museum practices.

This research project builds upon a small body of museum literature, such as Jennifer Evans' (1992) pilot survey on museum women in Aotearoa New Zealand, Gaby Porter (1996), Carol Duncan (1995), Sharon MacDonald (1997; 1998), Tony Bennett (1995), and Elaine Heumann Gurian (1995) have been particularly influential. I hope that museum researchers in Aotearoa New Zealand will continue to build upon our inquiries. Following is a list of ways that researchers who have a curiosity for museums and/or those who are interested in studying gendered workplace practices could extend from this research project:

1. I was interested in how the museum professionals experienced radical organisational transformation, I cared about them as people and I cared

about the politics associated with organisational change. I had observed how certain individuals in certain positions appeared to thrive in the changing work culture more than others and reasons for this were not solely attributed to survival skills or robust personalities. As a feminist I wanted to respect women's experiences, but perhaps erred on the side of *describing* the experiences rather than interpreting and understanding these experiences within broader discourses of gender (and power) relations within the museum. In particular the relationship between gender and customer service could have been extended such as investigating how both men and women "do gender" in the museum. In turn, a more thorough application of poststructuralist discourse analysis could have been adopted;

2. Feminisation theory and its relationship with economic restructuring was useful for shaping the thesis however I was determined to "prove" the significance of and use of feminisation theory at the expense of being able to adequately address any contradictions, resistances and counter-narratives to my "dominant framework";
3. Interviewing both women and men would be useful to assessing similarities and differences between men and women's experiences of museum work, particularly if the focus was on exploring contradictions, resistances and counter-narratives. Similarly interviewing people from all levels of the museum, including elites as well as mid-career museum professionals in addition to "cultural workers" and "non-cultural workers" would produce very different data sets to that of mid-career women. Interviews that explored differences about race, gender *and* sexuality would also be worth considering;
4. Focus group interviews would have been useful to explore themes about change and continuities in the museum, talking to a group of museum professionals would have enabled me to test my ideas and provide the opportunity for new themes to arise. Similarly observing museum professionals within the museum environment would have provided useful

professionals within the museum environment would have provided useful insights that a former museum professional may not have been able to access, and;

5. Further investigation into the claim that the feminisation of work does not necessarily mean a feminisation of power would be worthy of counter-argument. However, I would favour further investigation into the feminisation of the museum sector with specific emphasis on the social and cultural. More detailed data on the demographics of museum professionals *per se* would also assist with future research projects.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

What led you to enter the museum profession and what does your current work entail?

Describe aspects of your work that you particularly value, enjoy or find stimulating.

I'm interested in how you see museums and what attracts you to museums.

Do you feel valued in your institution?

Have you experienced an incident of gender bias in the workplace? If so, what happened? How did you feel? What were the implications of this?

What do you see as the impact of EEO policies on your own practice and the museum you work for?

Have you experienced an incident involving power dynamics in the workplace that impacted directly on you? If you have, describe what happened, how you felt and the repercussions of this incident.

How would you describe your commitment to your work?

Tell me about a time when your work pressures impacted on your sense of well-being, what coping strategies did you utilise both inside and outside the workplace?

Where are you in relation to your career path? What are you thinking of doing in the future? Where do you think your current job skills might lead?

What are the particular elements of the museum that draw or hold you to your job?

Are there any comments that you wish to make, or points you would like to elaborate on regarding your experiences as a woman in the museum profession in Aotearoa New Zealand?

*Museum Culture: women's experiences within the museum
profession in Aotearoa New Zealand*

Information Sheet

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You are invited to participate in a PhD research project focusing on “women’s experiences in the museum profession.” Of particular interest to me are your perceptions and understandings of museum work as a professional “choice” coinciding with detailed anecdotes of your everyday work experience (i.e. the joys, challenges and frustrations). These stories will serve as a means to explore and gain a better understanding about the intricacies and degrees of power and gender dynamics within a specific organisational culture for a specific group of people (i.e. tertiary educated, career focused, professional women working in museums).

Your involvement will comprise of participating in an interview with myself, the researcher. It is estimated that the interview will take about an hour (90 minutes maximum). I will then paraphrase excerpts from the interview transcript that capture a particular theme, such as emotions, passion, institutional restructuring or career development. As a follow up to the interview you will be asked to go over the selected interview excerpts, as it is important to me that your story is not “mis-represented” and that confidentiality is maintained. This may involve telephone calls, an exchange of letters or meeting again. If necessary, you may at any time withdraw from the research and remove any information that you have provided.

At the end of the project I shall return the tapes to you, however, I may want to use excerpts from the interview transcripts for future publication (such as academic journals or a conference presentation). If I were to work with the data beyond the constraints of the thesis document, confidentiality will be maintained.

I will be happy to discuss any concerns you may have about participating in this research project. Alternatively you are welcome to talk to my principal supervisor, Dr Julie Wuthnow, Feminist Studies Department, who can be reached on (03) 364 2702.

The University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee has reviewed the project.

I will be in touch with you again to discuss an interview time and date.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Cobley.

Museum Culture: women’s experiences within the museum profession in New Zealand

Researcher: Joanna Cobley

Feminist Studies Department, University of Canterbury

CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree to participate as a participant in the project; I consent to being interviewed with the full knowledge that it will be taped, and I consent to the publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved. I understand also that I may at any time withdraw from the project, including withdrawal of any information I have provided.

Signed _____

Date _____

Appendix B

A Brief Historical Background to the Formation of Museums and Art Galleries in Aotearoa New Zealand

The purpose of this brief historical account is to establish a framework for understanding the formation of museums and art galleries in Aotearoa New Zealand and their subsequent reliance on central government and local authority funds. Two important points arise from this account. First, museums and art galleries in Aotearoa New Zealand emerged from the initiative and enthusiasm of groups of citizens. Museums were formed through Historical Associations,⁶³ Mechanics Institutes,⁶⁴ private collections,⁶⁵ or “owed their development to the enthusiasm, knowledge and drive of certain individuals” (Neave 1978: 7).⁶⁶ Similarly, art galleries often stemmed

⁶³ For example, Te Manawa the newly merged Science Centre, Gallery and Museum of Manawatu was established by the amalgamation of three organisations, the Manawatu Museum Society, the Manawatu Philosophical Society and the more recent Science Centre Inc.

⁶⁴ The Christchurch Mechanics Institute lobbied for the need for public facilities such as a library and museum to the Canterbury Provincial Government, and in 1870 the Provincial Government passed the Museum and Library Ordinance Act, which ensured public funding for both (National Register of Archives and Manuscripts, 8 May 2002).

⁶⁵ Invercargill’s first museum was a private collection established in the 1870s by Mr Andrew McKenzie. This collection was later gifted to the Athenaeum Committee, who in turn tried to gift the collection to the City Council in 1880. However it was not until 1939 that the Southland Museum Board was constituted and became the responsibility of the Invercargill City Council (Watt c1971: 120).

⁶⁶ One example is the collection of Sir Julius von Haast (1822 – 1881), an intrepid explorer and geologist, which formed a significant portion of the Canterbury Museum (Rice 1999: 41). Objects included moa bones, Maori artefacts of “ethnographic interest,” and flora and fauna of pre-European Aotearoa New Zealand. Not only did collections such as Von Haast’s form the foundation of museums within Aotearoa New Zealand they also added to museum and private collections in Western Europe. For example, the abundance of moa bones and skeletons found from a nearby swamp gave the Canterbury Museum international kudos in the later 1860s – 1870s and Von Haast was able to exchange moa skeletons with leading European museums for their surplus exhibits (Rice 1999: 41).

from local art societies (Nelson, Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury and Dunedin are examples), some of which had a clear agenda to establish an art gallery.⁶⁷ A significant proportion of museums and art galleries in the main cities and towns in Aotearoa New Zealand were founded during the late 19th century and the early 20th century. Examples include the Auckland City Art Gallery (1887-1888), the Dunedin Public Art Gallery (1890), the Auckland Museum (1852), the Wanganui Museum (1892), the National Art Gallery (1892)⁶⁸ and the Canterbury Museum (1870) (Neave 1978: 7). Some museums and art galleries were established more recently, such as the Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt (1971) (Neave 1978: 7). Whatever the origins of the museum and art galleries, funding for their premises and collections came from a combination of bequests, fundraising initiatives of the respective society members, and public subscriptions (Neave 1978: 7). Significantly, the collections once gifted or purchased were held in trust by the museum. Once established, museums then hired professional staff⁶⁹ and appointed elected members to a board of trustees. The board of trustees' role was to govern the museum.

⁶⁷ Lawyer and amateur painter William Mathew Hodgkins (1839 – 1898), one of the founding members of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, had a very clear view of the role that the gallery would fulfil. His ideal was comparable to the National Gallery of Art, London (established 1824) (Entwisle 1990: 11). The works of art that Hodgkins wished to collect would not only provide Aotearoa New Zealand settlers with a connection with Britain and Europe, but also by including works by colonial artists in the Gallery's collection, Hodgkins hoped they would over time become considered as masterpieces in Aotearoa New Zealand's own history of art (Entwisle 1990: 11).

⁶⁸ The National Gallery of Art was founded by the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts but the building, which also housed the Dominion Museum, was not officially opened until 1936 (Statistics New Zealand 2000: 283).

⁶⁹ The Dunedin Public Art Gallery claims to have appointed the first curator, Robert Neilson, in 1922. To the Gallery this meant giving the collections a new level of care not seen before in Aotearoa New Zealand, in addition to having the benefit of professional advice for acquisitions to the collection (Entwisle 1990: 18). However, it was not until post-World War II, that a significant number of museums and art galleries in Aotearoa New Zealand employed their first directors; examples include the Auckland City Art Gallery in 1952 (Gamble & Shaw 1988: 37), the Robert McDougall Art Gallery in 1960 (Roberts & Bercusson 1982: 31) and the Suter, Nelson in 1976 (Butterworth 1999: 100).

The second point that arises from this brief historical survey is that museums in Aotearoa New Zealand rely principally on public funds for their operational costs. Each museum followed its own specific process of establishing a formal relationship with its local authority. With one or two exceptions, local authority involvement came after the museum and art gallery had been established and premises found to house the collections.⁷⁰ Once a relationship between the local authority and museum or art gallery had been established, the local authority's financial responsibility to the institution would over time increase significantly.⁷¹ A 1978 study shows that "almost all the municipal authorities were either the prime or sole source of funds" for regional museums and art galleries (Neave 1978: 9).⁷² Local authorities still remain the principal source of funds for museums. A later study conducted in 1996 claims that local authorities provide between 60 – 70 percent of museums funds (Donnelly 1996: 26). It is hard to compare these two studies directly as the first study indicates that 76 per cent of local authority funding went to cultural activities such as museums and art galleries, whereas the 1996 study shows what percentage of museum funds came from local authorities. We can only speculate that the level of local authority funding for museums and art galleries has declined since the 1970s primarily because of the general economic restructuring programme and tighter fiscal restraint placed on public organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand. In some circumstances local authorities have pulled back their level of museum funding with the expectation that museums generate other sources of revenue such as from bequests and donations, or

⁷⁰ A significant number of museums and art galleries in Aotearoa New Zealand have published detailed histories tracing the formation and development of each organisation, and their relationship with their respective local authorities. Examples include the Robert McDougall Art Gallery (Roberts & Bercusson 1982), the Auckland City Art Gallery (Gamble & Shaw 1988), the Suter, Nelson (Butterworth 1999), the Dunedin Public Art Gallery (Entwistle 1990) and the Hawkes Bay Museum (Fea & Pishief 1996).

⁷¹ In the case of the Auckland, Canterbury and Dunedin museums acts of parliament with their respective Provincial Governments gave them access to permanent local government funding (McKinlay Douglas 1995: 6; Neave 1978: 7).

⁷² Neave's study appears to be the first comprehensive study of the extent of local authority cultural assistance in Aotearoa New Zealand. In 1977 the Department of Internal Affairs sent out questionnaires to 26 local authorities, the results from this survey showed that art galleries, museums and art galleries combined, and museums "clearly absorb the great bulk of municipal authority cultural spending" in the years 1976/77 and 1977/78 (Neave 1978: 9).

from commercial initiatives such as merchandising or hiring out museum facilities for functions, in addition to government-funded agencies such as Creative New Zealand and the New Zealand Lotteries Commission.

In contrast to local government, central government's assistance to regional museums and art galleries has always been minimal. Central government operates as a patron for the arts and culture by favouring national projects. Te Papa is the only museum directly funded by the government. All other museum funding by central government is provided through government-funded organisations, which as already noted, include Creative New Zealand and the New Zealand Lotteries Commission. In addition, museums can also obtain government funds through Vote Education – by bidding as a service provider under the Learning Experiences Outside the Classroom Curriculum (LEOTC) – and the Foundation of Research in Science and Technology (FRST).⁷³

Central government funding for arts and culture in Aotearoa New Zealand has been formed on similar Arts Council models used in Britain, Canada and Australia. Through the use of arms-length agencies, such as Creative New Zealand, the government protected itself from making direct decisions about what constituted culture, and what forms of culture were worthy of support. However, this system also means that the central government's role as a patron of art and culture in Aotearoa New Zealand has been *ad hoc* and inconsistent. For instance, government spending increases during periods of anniversaries and celebrations such as Royal Tours, war commemorations, and the centennial and 150th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi Te Tiriti O Waitangi (Ministry of Cultural Affairs 1998: 35).

⁷³ The McKinlay Douglas Report notes “museums currently have some difficulty in accessing the public good science fund managed by FORST; they are technically eligible but face resistance because of concerns that they may use funds to cross subsidise other activity” (1995: v).

Historically the Department of Internal Affairs Cultural Section, constituted in 1946, administered all grants to museums and arts organisations, such as the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and the Royal New Zealand Ballet, as well as to individuals for overseas travel and study. In 1963 the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council was established as a government initiative to support the growth and development of Aotearoa New Zealand's cultural sector. Part of the public sector reforms meant that the government organisations involved in funding or administering the cultural sector underwent their own form of restructuring. For example, The QEII Arts Council was restructured in 1994 and is now The Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa, Creative New Zealand.⁷⁴ Creative New Zealand provides funding and support for Community Arts, Pacific Island Arts and Culture, and Maori Cultural initiatives. In 1991 the Ministry of Cultural Affairs was established and took over the responsibilities from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Division of Internal Affairs.⁷⁵ In 1999 the Ministry of Cultural Affairs was renamed the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Te Manatu Taonga and although not the sole provider of cultural policy, this change was an attempt to address the fragmented nature of government involvement in the cultural sector (Ministry of Cultural Affairs 1998: 9).

Despite the economic restructuring programme designed to streamline and place efficiency within public sector organisations, and the formation of the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Te Manatu Taonga, established to simplify central governments role as a cultural patron, funding for museums post-1984 remains fragmented and *ad hoc*. Although the government recognises its responsibility and the importance of its

⁷⁴ Part of Creative New Zealand's briefing was to be more self-sufficient and for a brief period a private sector appointee with commercial advertising experience managed Creative New Zealand as a way to make this transition. Until then, like most arts organisations elsewhere (see DiMaggio 1988: 5), Creative New Zealand had been led primarily by arts administrators.

⁷⁵ In the financial year 1999-2000 the Ministry of Culture and Heritage administered nearly \$100 million in annual grants to the following nine organisations: Te Papa, the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Creative New Zealand, the New Zealand Film Commission, the New Zealand Film Archive, the Royal New Zealand Ballet, Aotearoa Traditional Maori Performing Arts Society, New Zealand On Air (Broadcasting Commission) and the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (Statistics New Zealand 2000: 279).

role as patron of the arts and culture of Aotearoa New Zealand “it restricts its exposure to museum funding by insisting that this is the responsibility of the communities which own individual museums, and not that of the general tax-payer” (McKinlay Douglas 1995: 7). There is some evidence of private funding and sponsorship in the cultural sector but this does not operate at the same level as other countries, like the United States for example. In Aotearoa New Zealand there remains no tax incentive for private patronage of museums and the receipt of sponsorship, bequests and donations remains erratic (Donnelly 1996: 24). Post-1984, the cultural sector in Aotearoa New Zealand, like museums and art galleries, remains heavily dependent on public funds, and with the level of local authority funding of museums reducing, the future of this long-held tradition is both fragile and uncertain.